



Peregrine Oakham Church 28 Feb. Photo P. Scott

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WELCOME

Was ever spring so eagerly anticipated and welcome as this year! Were we ever so pleased to see the first spring flowers and hear the first early migrant birds? Now as the celandines and violets give way to primroses and cowslips, and we hear the chaff chaff's monotonous warble, looking forward to hearing willow warblers and eventually whitethroats, we have the chance to go out and begin to meet each other again. Our outdoor programme gets under way with a nightingale walk and is followed by a chance to find out about the wildlife of Clipsham Park avenue and woodland, so do come along and join us.

We are really looking forward to hosting all the summer events and hope as ever, that the weather will be kind. Details will be found later in Fieldfare, and on the website. You only need to drop an email to, or phone either Jeff Wilcox-Smith, Linda Clark or myself to book into any of this season's activities. Remember if weather is forecast to be bad, we may delay or cancel!

The website will shortly have a new look, and hopefully will be easier to use, so do use it to find out what we are up to and look for any last-minute changes to events. Thank you to Peter Scott and Margaret Conner for working on this with David Morton.

We very much hope that by the autumn we shall be able to meet again at the Community hub in Oakham but realise that some of you may be nervous of meeting indoors. We shall be investigating the possibility of doing both a live meeting and a virtual one, for any of you who prefer to stay at home. We are also aware that numbers at the hub may be limited if personal distancing is still in force, so a virtual presentation may be necessary alongside the actual one.

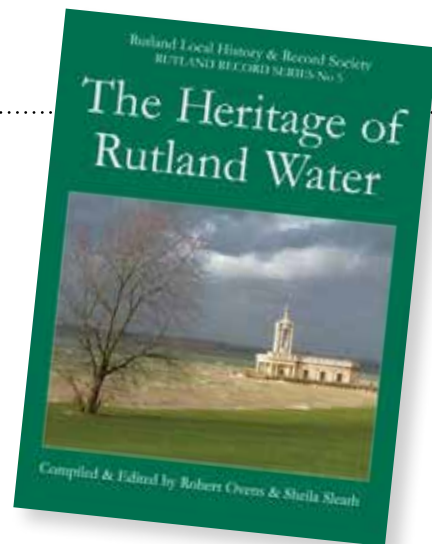
You will all be as pleased and impressed as we are that Phil (Rudkin of course) has now completed his summary of "The Orthoptera of Rutland" and is awaiting approval for printing, so it may be on sale to us before the end of the summer. We (RNHS) shall be in part sponsoring his publication, as we think it is a valuable resource to add to the available information on Rutland's natural fauna. We will pass on details as the publication becomes available. Have a wonderful summer!

Linda Biddle, RNHS Chair

RNHS NEWS

Auction of “Heritage of Rutland Water” by Shirley Sneath and Robert Ovens

As mentioned in January’s edition of Fieldfare, the above book, kindly donated by Richard and Linda Brown was put up for auction, going to the highest bidder which ended in March. Congratulations to Linda Clark, who won the auction and is now the proud owner of this lovely (big) book.



DIARY DATES



RNHS Indoor Evening Meetings

See Chairman’s report by Linda Biddle (Front cover). Future details will be on the website and in Fieldfare.

RNHS Outdoor Field Trips

Details of the following events appear on our website www.rnhs.org.uk. If the weather is bad, check the website or ring Linda Biddle, Linda Clark or Jeff Wilcox-Smith whose contact numbers are on the back page of Fieldfare.

Friday 30th April. 8.00pm.

Nightingales at Grafham water with Greg Belcher. TL144 670. Meet at Mander car park.

Due to national guidelines at this time, we can only accept groups of 6 people, so this will be on a first come first served basis. Please contact L. Biddle, L. Clark or Jeff Wilcox-Smith to book your place. If more than 6 people are interested, but miss out on this field trip, there is a suggestion that we may organise a local walk with nightingales at a later date. You will be informed when you come to book.

Saturday 8th May.

Dawn chorus. 3.45am.

Book your place with Linda and Anthony Biddle. Places limited to 4 people only, as Linda and Anthony will be hosting. Location to be decided when you book.

Saturday 22nd May.

All day Bioblitz at Clipsham park avenue.

This event is open to everyone so please see page opposite for details of this exciting event.

Thursday 27th May.

An evening with Joe and Mary Nourish at Beaumont Chase farm.

Details nearer the time on website and next Fieldfare.

Other society meetings.

LRWT events.

Wednesday 28th April. 7.30 – 8.30pm.

The next 5 years for Nature conservation in Leicestershire and Rutland.

A talk by Tim Graham, chief executive of Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust.

This is an online zoom meeting. Go to the events page on their website to book your place.

CLIPSHAM PARK AVENUE BIOBLITZ

May 22nd 2021 - All day!!

Do come along and join us

When you like for as long as you like

All ages welcome Bring your own refreshments

Loos available

Join a nature walk or wander at will + record your own Discoveries.

Our aim is to record as many species as possible.

Sign up to join walks as shown below by email to
Jeff Wilcox-Smith at Wilcoxsmith@btinternet.com

- 7.30am **Bird walk with Terry Mitcham**
- 9.30am **Small mammals with Linda Biddle**
- 10.30am **Flowering plants and Microfungi with John
Rodgers and Roy Lemmon**
- 11.30am **Butterflies**
- 2.00pm **Insects and others Jayne Walker**
- 2.45pm **Crickets and Grasshoppers Phil Rudkin**
- 8.30pm **Mothtrapping with Paul Bennett TBC**
- 9.00pm **Batwalk with Jenny Harris**

Let's hope the weather is good!!

All above details may be subject to change at short notice.

Make sure you look at the website before coming, at www.rnhs.org.uk.

January 2021

Atmospheric pressure and wind. Pressures were relatively high from the 1st to the 18th and then there occurred a period of low pressures from the 19th to the 25th; this included the named storm Christophe on the 20th and 21st. The lowest pressure of the month was 982 mb on the 21st and the highest 1025 mb on the 9th.

Winds were NW-NE up to the 10th and then mostly SW-N to the end of the month. Storm Christophe gave wind speeds up to 19 mph at 09.00 on the 20th and higher during that day, but those speeds were not exceptional.

Temperature. The mean for the month, 2.94 °C, puts January 2021 firmly at the bottom of the list for the decade 2012–2021, well below January 2017 at 3.52 °C. There were 14 air frosts, and the lowest overnight minima were –3.9 °C on 23rd–24th, and –4.0 °C on the succeeding night. The highest daytime maximum was 12.7 °C on the 19th and the lowest was on the 24th when the mercury rose to just 0.1 °C.

Precipitation. This month saw rain, sleet and snow, but it is all recorded as liquid. The total was 110.1 mm (4.33 inches), which is 219% of my long-term mean of 31 years, but not quite so wet as January 2014 at 111 mm.

There were two periods of snow, the first on the 14th and 15th gave a depth between 0–2 cm but went almost immediately, and then a heavier fall on the 24th when 12.9 mm, measured as rain, gave 12–13 cm of level snow which remained until the 28th.

February 2021

Atmospheric pressure and wind. Pressures started low this month and remained so until the 11th, and this period contained the month's lowest at 993 mb on the 3rd. There was then a brief high-pressure incident of 3 days when it reverted again to cyclonic conditions, and the month finished with 3 days of very high pressures, including the month's highest of 1043 mb on the 27th. Winds during this latter

period were westerlies and of very low speeds, giving air frosts and low visibilities early in the day.

Temperature. The first half of the month was very cold with an overnight mean minimum of –0.96 °C, which appears as nothing compared with the same half of 2012 when the mean was –4.2 °C. The lowest temperature this month was registered at –7.8 °C on 9th–10th, but again this is exceeded by February 2012, when it was –14 °C, also on the 9th–10th.

The second half was much warmer; there were just 3 air frosts in this period and a daytime maximum of 17.7 °C on the 24th. The overall mean temperature for the month was 5.22 °C which places February 2021 fifth in the decade 2012–2021.

Precipitation. The total measured as liquid, was 53.9 mm (2.12 inches) which is 140% of the long-term mean. Snow fell on the 6th to the 9th inclusive, a total of 10.2 mm as liquid, i.e. 19% of the total for the month.

March 2021

Atmospheric pressure and wind. Basically, a month of high pressure except for the 10th–14th inclusive, during which the month's lowest pressure, 989.5 mb, occurred on the 13th. At the same time there were high winds and some rain, and at 09.00 on the 11th I recorded gusts up to 32 mph and this was exceeded as the day went on. These storms do not seem to have been named. Winds during this time were SW-W as they were from 22nd to the end of the month, but otherwise were NW-NE.

Temperature. The overall mean was 7.91 °C, which put this March fifth in the decade 2012–2021 but there were no air frosts, and this was reflected in the mean minimum 4.23 °C which was third in the same decade.

The highest daytime maxima were 22.9 °C and 23.8 °C on the 30th and 31st respectively.

Precipitation. A total of 28.9 mm for the month (1.14 inches) which is 75% of my long-term mean.



AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

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January, February and March 2021

Frogs and toads are the only species that have been reported so far this year. Although a Common Frog was seen on an Oakham pavement on 29 January, the next record was not until 11 March, when spawn and twelve frogs were seen in a Wing pond. From 17 March to the end of the month spawn was also reported from Oakham, Little Casterton and Exton. On 19 March five pairs of Common Toads were seen in amplexus at Quarry Farm, Little Casterton and on 21 March there were about 40 in amplexus in Exton.

As this is a rather slim report, I thought it might be worth mentioning an article in The Herpetological Bulletin of The British Herpetological Society, Winter 2020 edition, concerning invasive pond sliders, in view of the record of a Red-eared Slider *Trachemys scripta* in Eye Brook Reservoir in May last year, which may well have been the same individual seen there in 2003. It has been assumed that the climate in Britain is too cold for these reptiles to reproduce.

Carsten Schradin of Strasbourg University observed exotic pond turtles in an oxbow lake of the River Rhine in Germany, close to the French border near Strasbourg from 2016 to 2020. He observed no less than six different species of pond turtle, the majority of which were Red-eared Sliders. The annual peak count increased from 33 individuals in 2016 to

166 in 2020. In 2019 and 2020 hatchlings were seen more than 100 metres from the water on six occasions and in June 2020 a female was observed laying 24 eggs in a hole in the ground in an adjacent park.

Although almost certainly irresponsible pet owners were continuing to dump their unwanted pets of various species, the finding of hatchlings some distance from the lake suggested that they had hatched in the wild and not been dumped, which would have been by the lake. He points out that the hatchlings are likely to have been male due to the low temperature, whereas captive bred turtles tend to be female as they are incubated at a higher temperature, for commercial reasons, which skews the sex ratio to predominantly female young.

It had been assumed that the climate in Germany, like Britain, was too cold for *T. scripta* to reproduce, although it has reproduced readily in Spain and France, as well as in Croatia and Slovenia. Although it has been illegal to release the species in the EU since 2014, (and hopefully will continue in post-Brexit Britain), clearly this is ignored and, if the climate is going to become warmer, hatchlings of both sexes may be produced leading to an unwelcome exponential population increase.

BATS

RECORDER Jenny Harris

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January, February and March 2021

The period from January to March is usually a quiet one for bat records. In addition, this year the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Habitats (IUCN) advised against surveying hibernation sites because of the risk of passing COVID-19 to bats, through droplets in the cold damp air of these sites. Although we never touch them, we do often get quite close to bats during identification.

There were two records of bat activity during the period. The first was the sighting and video recording of a bat in flight over Main Street, Egleton at MR SK876073 on 17 February. It appeared to be a large bat, flying relatively low (barns and trees seen in the background), in full daylight at 3.26pm and is suspected to have been a Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* bat. A small bat was flying in a garden in Vicar's Close, Exton, on 25 March, SK927109.

One grounded bat was recorded; a female Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* found on 8 March in Manor Lane, Langham, MR SK842113. It had a punctured lung,

possibly a cat victim, and died soon after taking into care. At a weight of 4.2g it was very underweight for the time of year.

In July to August 2020, Nathalie Cossa of the Bat Group and the Wildlife Trust, provided an SM4 mini bat detector to record bats in Rutland for her Bats in Your Back Yard Project. The detector can be put out and left unattended for a chosen period; each site had the detector for roughly a week. After analysing the recordings, which is very time-consuming, in March 2021 Nathalie provided records for the four sites where the detector was used.

Site 1. North-east edge of Oakham, between Burley Road and Woodland View (approx. SK865090). The species recorded were quite surprising for an urban site: Common, Soprano *P. pygmaeus* and Nathusius' *P. nathusii* Pipistrelles, Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, Noctule and Leisler's *Nyctalus leisleri* bats. The Nathusius' was a surprise because this species had only been recorded at Rutland Water previously. Noctule is a fast, high-flying bat that can turn up almost anywhere, though rarely over urban areas. The Leisler's was a complete surprise, as they are very uncommon,

considered to be mostly woodland species and only recorded twice before in Rutland. They are classified by the IUCN as Near Threatened (i.e., with extinction) in Britain. There are no known roosts in Rutland, though they are known to breed in Bourne Woods.

Site 2 and 3. Ketton, a garden in Aldgate, with an additional site on the edge of a horse paddock nearby. The garden is next to the R. Chater, has shrubs, several large trees and a pond. This insect-rich habitat provided a high volume of bat activity. Once again Common, Soprano and Nathusius' Pipistrelles were recorded (the last in small numbers), plus Brown Long-eared bat, Noctule and Barbastelle. Noctules have previously been recorded over this part of Ketton, so not a surprise. However, the Barbastelle was an interesting record, as although they have been recorded in small numbers around the quarry it was not known they occurred in local gardens. The Barbastelle has been classified as 'in imminent risk of extinction' in Britain on the IUCN Red List of Mammals, which will be because of habitat loss (it is a woodland specialist) including insect-rich feeding areas close to roosts. The horse paddock, on the other hand, which is a large, heavily grazed field with few trees except along its boundary with the river, had many fewer bat species and much less bat activity. Surprisingly, no Myotis species were recorded in the riverside garden, although Natterer's Myotis nattereri and Whiskered M. mystacinus bats have been recorded 'grounded' in Aldgate. Daubenton's bats feed over the R. Chater just beyond the garden boundary.

Site 4. Ridlington. The SM4 Mini was in a garden on the east side of Ridlington in square SK850025. Although there are a lot of large arable fields around the village, Ridlington itself

has some large houses and gardens and tree-lined roads. The R. Chater flows through the valley less than 1Km away. Seven species were recorded, counting recordings of Myotis as one species, plus Common, Soprano and Nathusius' Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Noctule and Barbastelle. Both the Barbastelle and Nathusius' were detected infrequently but were still a surprise since the area around the village does not appear to be classic habitat for either species. All in all, this was an interesting and informative exercise, and I hope we get the opportunity to have the detector again.

Nathusius' Pipistrelles at Rutland Water

The first Nathusius' Pipistrelle was recorded in Burley Wood in July 2005 by JH and Ian Howden of Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group. Studying the species in Rutland under the National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project (NNPP) began in 2014 but was suspended in 2020 because of COVID-19 restrictions. At the County Recorders' Conference on 25 March 2021, Tom Bennett who now runs the Project in this area gave a summary of the findings to date. He reported that with harp trapping and mist netting a total of 52 Nathusius' Pipistrelles have been caught over the six-year period, each bat being individually ringed with a unique number. Five locations have been trapped, usually with at least three and sometimes six or more, trap sites. In 2019 members of bat groups from Leicestershire and Rutland, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire covered nine trap sites at three locations: Barnsdale and Hambleton Woods, and Egleton Nature Reserve. Later that year a new site, Lyndon Nature Reserve, was added. The six-year totals are as follows:

Location	Male	Female	Adult	Juvenile	Unknown	Total
Barnsdale Wood	5	1	4	1	1	6
Burley Wood	8	1	9	0	0	9
Hambleton Wood	28	5	32	1	0	33
Egleton NR	2	0	2	0	0	2
Lyndon NR (2019 only)	2	0	2	0	0	2
Total	45	7	49	2	1	52

The population around Rutland Water are considered to be resident, and the bats used to breed in the deer hide at Six Riding in Burley Wood. This is no longer available to the bats, and currently no roosts are known in the area. The search goes on!



Harp trap May 2017. Photo L. Biddle



Left soprano pip. Right nathusius pip. Photo Lorna Griffiths

Covid limitations did not adversely affect our bird recording and there were many interesting records in this quarter. At Rutland Water, Great Northern Divers remained in good numbers with seven still present at the end of March. Scaup and Smew were also present along with good numbers of Goldeneye. Of special note was the arrival of pairs of Peregrines at churches in Oakham and Stamford, with breeding hoped for at both sites. Rutland Water's Ospreys may have some competition if they are successful! Great White and Little Egrets remained through the brief colder spells and an early Spoonbill visited Rutland Water. Regular visits to Quarry Farm produced a Jack Snipe and there was an impressive count of Golden Plovers near Cottesmore in early March.

We now expect earlier signs of spring with singing Chiffchaffs, as possible overwintering birds were heard in February. A singing Blackcap at Stamford may also have been overwintering and making use of garden feeders. Gardens attracted Lesser Redpolls and Siskins, with the occasional Brambling and Reed Bunting, and Redwings and Fieldfares during snowy periods. With the hope of being able to range more widely in the months ahead and the opening of Rutland Water Nature Reserve, we may look forward to a more normal spring and summer.

My thanks to the following for their records: -
T Appleton, D & J Ball, P Bennett, A J & L Biddle, T Caldicott, L Clarke, D P Cole, T Collins, A & J Comber, M Dixon, Dr. C H Gallimore, M & G Griffin, J Harris, A H J Harrop, P Langston, A Lawrence, LROS, M Markham, D Masters, K Mather, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, J W Nourish, C I Park, J & J Rodgers, RWNR, P Scott, and T Sexton.

January 2021

Highlights. 30 Bewick's Swans flew over Oakham (30th). A juvenile Whooper Swan was at Fort Henry Ponds (9th) and Rutland Water (24th-31st). A Black-throated Diver was at Rutland Water (3rd) and six Great Northern Divers were present all month along with a Black-necked Grebe. A Kittiwake was at Rutland Water (3rd). A Short-eared Owl was along Pickworth Drift (3rd) and a Common Redpoll was in an Oakham garden (19th).

Rutland Water. Two Barnacle Geese were at Whitwell (18th). Five Red-crested Pochards were in south arm (18th) with female (1st) and male (7th) Scaup also there. A male Smew was by Manton bridge (2nd, 24th) with three (two males) in north arm (25th). Five Goosander were at the dam (11th). Three Marsh Harriers roosted at Egleton (3rd). One or two Water Rails were at Egleton. Seven Dunlin were in Manton Bay (8th) with a Green Sandpiper there (2nd, 7th) and a Redshank at Whitwell (18th). Kingfishers were near Berrybut Spinney (19th, 22nd). Great Spotted Woodpeckers drummed at Berrybut and north arm on (18th). Six Chiffchaffs were at Egleton (2nd) and a Stonechat was by Manton Bay all month. 52 Lesser Redpolls were at Egleton (2nd) and 60 Siskins at Manton Bay (13th).

Other Sites. Four Mandarin Ducks were at Geeston (31st). 122 Wigeon were on a flooded field at Cottesmore (17th). At Fort Henry Ponds there were nine Shoveler (17th), 65 Gadwall (9th) and 77 Wigeon (23rd). A Great White Egret was in Exton Park (9th). 70 Golden Plovers were near Cottesmore (10th). Woodcock were near Wing (11th) and Tunneley Wood (four on 23rd) and five Snipe were flushed at Quarry Wood (13th, 22nd). Barn Owls were at Fort Henry and Wing and Kingfishers at Fort Henry Ponds. A Great Spotted Woodpecker drummed at Barrow (7th). Peregrines were over Fort Henry and Wing (3rd), Manton (12th) and Ketton (31st), with one photographed on Oakham church (30th). A Willow Tit was near Wing (9th). A Cetti's Warbler was at a new private site (17th). Blackcaps visited gardens in Manton and Oakham (two). Four Stonechats were in Exton Park (3rd, 29th) with a pair at Fort Henry (30th). 150 Linnets were in Exton Park (3rd) and Lesser Redpolls were in Oakham and Wing gardens.

February 2021

Highlights. Brent Geese were heard over Rutland Water (10th), where a Whooper Swan remained all month, with eight over Exton Park (13th). Up to five Great Northern Divers remained on main water at Rutland Water. A Little Gull was in Manton Bay on (15th). A Merlin was seen near Langham (18th) and a Willow Tit sang at Martinsthorpe (4th).

Rutland Water. Two Barnacle Geese seen near Whitwell (24th). Eight Pintail were at Egleton and Scaup were present all month with eight (20th). 11 Smew were seen (5th) with 13 (20th). A Black-necked Grebe was at the dam (15th-18th) and a Great White Egret was present (27th). Waders included four Oystercatchers, six Avocets past Barnsdale (27th), 1500 Lapwings, 822 Golden Plover and 20 Dunlin. Ringed Plovers were noted (6th, 9th) and three Green Sandpipers (23rd). A Barn Owl was seen (9th) and a Kingfisher was at the dam (3rd). The first Sand Martin was seen (24th). A Chiffchaff was by south arm (23rd) with two Stonechats nearby (16th). An early White Wagtail was at the dam (26th).

Other Sites. Two pairs of Mandarin Ducks were at Morcott (24th). 165 Wigeon were on floods at Cottesmore (22nd). Grey Partridges were near Manton (1st) and Great Casterton (11th). A Great White Egret was at Leighfield Fishponds (27th) with a Water Rail there on the same date. Curlew were back at breeding sites near Barrow and at Merry's Meadow (26th). Woodcock were at Barnsdale, Barrow, Westland and Tunneley (three) Woods. Barn Owls were at Lyndon, Leighfield, Oakham, Fort Henry and Morcott. Tawny Owls called at eight sites, with three at Martinsthorpe (5th). Little Owls were noted at Barrow, Morcott and Langham. A pair of Peregrines seem set to breed on Oakham church with singles at Ketton, Langham and Martinsthorpe. Marsh Tits were at Tunneley Wood, Barnsdale Gardens and Wing. Chiffchaffs were at Manton (11th) and in song at North Luffenham (22nd) and Cottesmore Wood (28th). Blackcaps were in the gardens at Oakham (8th-15th) and Manton (all month). Stonechat pairs were at Fort Henry (13th) and Exton Park (20th) with one at Leighfield (21st). A Brambling was in an Oakham garden (9th) and up to seven Lesser Redpolls were in another Oakham garden (4th-28th).

March 2021

Highlights. Seven Great Northern Divers remained at Rutland Water (to 31st). There was a Spoonbill (22nd) and the first Osprey returned (16th). A Sandwich Tern passed through (31st). There was a Bearded Tit (6th), a Rock Pipit (19th) and a male Snow Bunting at the dam (6th). Eyebrook had a Brent Goose (29th -31st). Quarry Farm had a Jack Snipe (5th-15th) and a Short-eared Owl was spotted at Luffenham Airfield (31st).

Rutland Water. The count (15th) produced a White-fronted Goose, 1422 Wigeon, 136 Gadwall, two Pintail, 67 Shoveler, 973 Tufted Ducks, 341 Goldeneye (450 on 17th) and four Smew. Other wildfowl included a fly-over Pink-footed Goose, a juvenile Whooper Swan to (14th), four Scaup (20th) and a Common Scoter (7th). Waders included 34 Oystercatchers, three Avocets (29th), 120 Golden Plovers, a Grey Plover (30th), Little Ringed Plovers (25th and 29th), one or two Ringed Plovers (5th – 31st) six Curlews, a fly-over Whimbrel (9th), a Knot (8th – 15th), five Black-tailed Godwits (31st), five Green Sandpipers and six Redshanks. A Marsh Harrier was a regular

(1st – 26th) and a Mediterranean Gull was seen at Egleton (11th). A Willow Tit was heard at Egleton (8th, 16th). The first Sand Martins were on (11th) with a Swallow (23rd). White Wagtails were at the dam (7th, 26th) and a Wheatear was at Egleton (30th).

Other Sites. Eyebrook had Smew to at least (20th) with a peak of seven on (14th). Grey Partridges were at Quarry Farm and Exton Park. Two Great White Egrets were at Leighfield Fishponds (2nd) and two Little Egrets were at Fort Henry Ponds (27th). Seven Buzzards were near Little Casterton (22nd) and a Marsh Harrier flew over Manton (15th). Circa 1500 Golden Plover were near Cottesmore (8th) and a Little Ringed Plover flew over Quarry Farm (29th). Curlews were back at Luffenham Airfield (12th) and Woodcock were at Wing (4th), Quarry Farm (8th) and Tunneley Wood (9th). Little Owls were at Edith Weston, Normanton and Wing and Peregrines at Fort Henry (13th) with a pair set to nest on Oakham church. Five Wheatears were at Luffenham Airfield (27th) with 11 there (31st). Three Bramblings were in Exton Park (28th) with up to four Lesser Redpolls and ten Siskins in an Oakham garden.

Wildfowl Counts – January, February and March 2021

	FHP and Exton Park 17.01.	FHP and Exton Park 13.02.	FHP and Exton Park 13.03.	Banthorpe GP 17.01.	Banthorpe GP 15.02.	Banthorpe GP
Canada Goose			2			2
Greylag Goose	5		5	113	56	32
Mute Swan	13	13	9	6	3	2
Whooper Swan		8				
Egyptian Goose		2				
Shelduck			1			
Shoveler	9	4	1			1
Gadwall	55	55	54			2
Wigeon	64	108	119	2	2	1
Mallard	98	115	52	60	44	11
Teal	2	11		24	48	1
Pochard		1				
Tufted Duck	54	60	44	2	5	12
Goosander		1				
Little Grebe	5					
Grey Heron	1	2			1	1
Little Egret			1			
Cormorant	3	3	1		1	
Moorhen	9	5	9	3	5	4
Coot	30	27	30		2	4
Kingfisher	1					
TOTAL	349	415	328	210	167	73

	Rutland Water 08.02.	Rutland Water 15.03.	Holywell Lake 14.03.
Canada Goose	502	116	27
Barnacle Goose			
Greylag Goose	222	247	10
White-fronted Goose		1	
Mute Swan	173	132	3
Egyptian Goose	7	17	
Shelduck	19	24	
Mandarin Duck	3	2	
Shoveler	66	67	
Gadwall	321	136	16
Wigeon	2056	1422	106
Mallard	392	306	24
Pintail	36	2	
Teal	219	107	4
Pochard	58	80	
Tufted Duck	1280	973	18
Scaup	9	1	
Goldeneye	326	341	
Smew	3	4	
Goosander	12		
Great Northern Diver	3	3	
Little Grebe	108	9	
Great Crested Grebe	114	112	
Black-necked Grebe	1		
Grey Heron	3	29	
Great White Egret	3	2	
Little Egret		3	
Cormorant	141	142	
Water Rail		12	
Moorhen	22	28	18
Coot	1146	436	3
TOTAL	7247	4754	229



Barn Owl Oakham 5 March 2021. Photo P. Scott



Short eared owl. Photo P. Scott

BOTANY

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The quantity of Blackthorn blossom, Daisies and Lesser Celandine around us suggests that Spring is here, but as I write (Tuesday 6th), there is a very cold wind, and it is snowing. A temporary phenomenon, I'm sure. There is a Hornbeam just outside with catkins and leaves, so it must be Spring!

Not many records to report at the moment. It seems to be a good year for Lesser Celandine and for sweet Violets too, with many clumps reported, white as well as blue. Hazel catkins were seen by 19th February in Stoke Dry Wood and Primrose by the 18th of March. There were Snowdrops from several sites, but the first reports of Cowslips came at the end of March, (30th), on Hambleton Road Egleton. One unusual record was Butterbur to the east of Oakham bypass, found by Jenny Harris. There have only been two other reports of this plant in the last 11 years, from Wardley Wood and Ryhall. The name comes from the way in which the leaves were used. The plant flowers before the leaves appear, which are large, like gigantic rhubarb leaves, and make excellent umbrellas if caught in a storm, but they were used to wrap butter in, being thick, supple and cooling because of their downy underside.

I reported on the New Year Plant Hunt last time. There was one plant that Jenny Harris, Linda Clark and Donnie Tang found in the allotments opposite Lidl that they couldn't identify, so Jenny

asked me. It was eventually identified by Geoffrey Hall as a Balkan Spurge *Euphorbia oblongata*, which is a garden escapee. It is rare in Leicestershire and Rutland but had been recorded in 2019 in the same place by Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin.

I learnt very recently that there are two types of Cowslip. There is an S type, with stamens showing, and an L type, where only the round head of the style shows. They occur naturally in a 50:50 ratio, but this becomes imbalanced as the Cowslip population declines due to a loss of habitat or changes in agricultural practice. This means that the observed ratio of the two types is a good indicator of the quality of grassland. Plantlife are taking part in a Europe-wide study of Cowslips to establish the state of grasslands and would like anybody interested to join this survey. (If you are, please visit plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/cowslip-survey and join in)

I mentioned the characteristic walk of a botanist last time. This contrasts with those of a more vigorous gait, with head up and turning from side to side. Suddenly there's a halt, arms come up and "Blast it's gone!" - which can only be an ornithologist at work.

Records were received from Duncan and Jane Ball, Carolyn Baxter, Linda Clarke, Donnie Tang, Jenny Harris, Roy Lemmon, and JSR.

BUTTERFLIES

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No reports of any butterflies were received for January. Not surprising given the frosts, rain and snow!

February was also very cold for the first half but from the 15th, temperatures were daily in double figures and between 24th and 28th, the first reports started coming in.

March was cold and there were only 7 reports until an unusually warm and sunny final 3 days produced multiple records of 4 species.

The first BRIMSTONE was a male at Ridlington on 24th February. All the brimstones reported in this period were males except one. The next Brimstones were at Oakham on 26th and Barrow on 27th February. A few reports came towards the end of March and one at Oakham Arboretum (OA) on 24th. Then the final 3 days of 'summer' weather produced a flurry of reports. March 29th had a remarkable 11 (eleven!) reported at Ketton Quarry (KQ) by David Needham, followed by 3 at KQ on 30th March. Single males were also seen that day at Oakham, Wychley Warren (Empingham), Bloody Oaks Quarry (BOQ) Quarry Farm (QF) and OA. The last one was at Oakham on 31st March.

The first SMALL TORTOISESHELL was in Oakham on 27th February with 3 more the following day at OA, Barrow and Oakham. A devout single was in Wing Church on 21st March

and a single reported from OA on 24th. Then the warm weather brought out singles at KQ on 29th, QF and BOQ on 30th March. Singles in Uppingham on 29th, 30th and 31st March.

The PEACOCK was not reported until March 17th when one was at KQ. Another devout individual joined the Small Tortoiseshell inside Wing Church on 21st March. A record from OA on 25th March was followed by one at KQ on 29th. The final 2 days of March saw 2 at KQ, 2 at BOQ and singles at Oakham and OA all on 30th with the last at Oakham on 31st March.

The first COMMA was seen at Ridlington on 26th February. March records were a single at OA on 9th and then in the warm spell there was a single at KQ on 29th and 30th and one at Oakham also on 30th.

So only 4 species were recorded in the period, but events just show what a warm spell of weather can bring out. As I write this in an exceptionally cold early April (yet to see a butterfly) I can only hope that the weather turns warmer soon.

I would like to thank the following for their records: *Jacky Morrell, Robin Ingall, Alistair Lawrence, Diana Masters, Jane and Duncan Ball, David Needham, Charles Gallimore and Peter Scott.*

Our knowledge and understanding of the Natural World have increased dramatically in my lifetime. So much more is known about life on our planet, not least the interconnectedness of all living things and the importance of biodiversity to any quality of life on earth. Fungi play an incredibly important role in this regard.

Over these three months a total of 28 identified species were reported. This number is not bad, given the lockdown restrictions, the time of year and the inexperience of Linda and Carolyn, our new fungi recorders. Our fungi guidebooks are becoming well thumbed, NatureSpot well used, and the fascination with fungi increasing with each new discovery, and luckily, we still have Linda Worrall's old records to hand. These records are incredibly detailed, and in the future, I hope to make a 'data base' which can be used as a reference as to what has been found, where and when, starting with Clipsham Park Avenue in time for the Bioblitz planned for in May.



Jelly ear on old bumblebee box. Oakham. Photo D. Masters

Due to restrictions over the winter, the number of areas visited which have generated reports have been restricted. I have listed the places where the fungi were found, followed by the species, and hopefully, this will make it easier for members to go and read about discoveries in places that are of particular interest to them. If anyone is out and about and spots any fungi, please take a couple of photos and send them with the date and place to Carolyn or Linda.

Hambleton Peninsula.

Stags Horn/Candlesnuff Fungus. *Xylaria hypoxylon*. Cramp Balls/King Alfred's Cakes. *Daldinia concentrica*. Hairy Curtain Crust *Stereum hirsutum*. Puff Ball spp. Old specimens. Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*. Elder Whitewash *Hypodontia sambuci*. Variable Oysterling *Crepidotus variabilis*

Stoke Woods.

Resupinate Fungus *Coriolellus albidus* identification was complicated by the presence of lichens and possibly another fungus but making this look like a miniature forest on snow. Hairy Curtain Crust *Stereum hirsutum*. Turkeytail *Trametes versicolor*. Witches' Butter *Exidia thuretiana*. Purple Jellydisc

Ascocoryne sarcoides. White Crust Fungus *Schizopora* sp. Cinnamon Bracket fungus *Hapalopilus nidukans*.

Bloody Oaks Quarry.

Microfungi. Ascomycete. *Diaporthe samaricola* on seed part of the samara of Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* Coelomycete *Neosetophoma sumaroum* on wing of the Ash samara (samara = dry winged one seeded fruit) *Calloria neglecta* on old nettle stem *Urticaria dioica*.

Ketton Quarry.

Elder Whitewash *Hypodontia sambuci*. Scarlet Elf Cap *Sarcoscypha austriaca*. Cramp Balls/King Alfred's Cakes. *Daldinia concentrica*. Microfungi *Leptosphaeria acuta* in Woodland on old nettle stem. *Terana caerulea* on fallen Ash log.

Prior's Coppice

Scarlet Elf Cap *Sarcoscypha austriaca*. Cramp Balls/King Alfred's Cakes. *Daldinia concentrica*. *Ganoderma* spp. - bracket fungus on dead oak unable to unidentify exact species.

Wing and surrounds.

Birch Polypore *Piptoporus betulinus*. Velvet Shank *Flammulina velutipes*. Turkeytail *Trametes versicolor*. Collared Earthstar *Geastrum triplex*. Yellow Brain Fungus *Tremella mesenterica*. Oyster mushroom *Pleurotus ostreatus*. Coral Spot *Nectria cinnabarina*

Seaton Meadow.

Turf Mottlegill *Panaeolus fimicola*.

Uppingham, Gypsy Lane.

Scurfy Twiglet *Tubaria furfuracea*. Coral Spot *Nectria cinnabarina*

Oakham in a garden on an old bumble bee box Jelly Ear *Auricularia auricula* very young fresh specimen.

Many thanks to Jenny Harris, Diana Masters and Roy Lemmon for records.



Oyster mushroom. Photo L. Clark

MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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For our first report of 2021 - star billing for a lovely red fox photographed in Jackie Morrell's Ridlington garden in February. Marian Markham in Langham has also had lots of visits from foxes, up to 3 or 4 different animals identifiable on the trail camera, - one female, a male, another darker male and a male with a skinny tail, sometimes two animals in one night. At the end of February on one video clip, a female fox appeared early in the evening and was approached by a muntjac, but the two passed very close together and proceeded to totally ignore each other. At Leighfield fishponds a fox was observed in late March.

In late January and early Feb, Dr Gallimore was fortunate enough to see an otter swimming in the inlet to the old Burley fishpond area of RW on two separate occasions, and at Manton Bridge, Tim Caldicott saw another - or perhaps the same one - a week later. Due to lockdown, there has been no evidence of otters through the rest of RWNr, but that will change this week when we are at last free to visit the reserve and continue our monitoring activities.

Happily, outside RWNr there are two records of water vole this time. In January at Oakham canal, one of the vole rafts was seen with a food pile on it (see photo) and even better, between Exton and Greetham village, burrows in the bank of the upper North Brook and water vole droppings confirmed their presence in a "new" area.

Two stoats have been reported, one by a stone wall at Martinthorpe in February, and another in Tunnely Wood in early March.

Badger activity has been noted at many setts in the Stamford area, and snufflings along the edge of paths and tracks where they have been prospecting for worms.

Brown Hare have been seen in many parts of the county, as they prepared for the breeding season, and rabbits reported from Pickworth, Little Casterton, Tolethorpe and Barrow. If you know of other areas, please do send your reports. Although rabbits are commonly seen there are relatively few records of their presence.

Very few records of hedgehog have been received this spring. The first record of the year was on 19th March in the Barrow garden of Jane and Duncan Ball (unless I have missed some). I hope there have been other sightings which you will be able to send me. We normally have several reports in January, and the weather then was not too cold, so I would have expected some from Oakham.

Molehills have been found in Barrow, Cottesmore, RWNr fisherman's car park, Walk farm Pickworth, and in the sheep field at Exton.

Grey squirrels are as ever commonly seen, but relatively few are reported this time from Pickworth, Barrow, and Langham.

On the patio of the Willows garden in Barrow, a bank vole puts in regular appearances near the box hedge, and a short-tailed vole was seen at the top end of Barrow. Along the side of the roadway from Tunnely wood to the lakes at Exton, there is a strip of rough grass which is home to a number of short

tailed voles, the runs and holes easily seen.

One roe deer has been spotted by Terry Mitcham in Westland wood at the end of March. The most commonly seen animal has been the muntjac. They are reported from Ridlington, Eye Brook, Fishponds cottage, Leighfield, Pickworth and Barrow where they continue to find a way into the Willows garden in spite of efforts being made to exclude them. They are also seen almost nightly on the trail camera at Langham.

Finally, fallow deer were seen only at Exton and at Pickworth, with groups of 4 at Westland Wood and 4 adjacent to Turnpole wood, and the largest, a herd of 18 seen on Pickworth drift in March.

Outside Rutland on a Lincolnshire expedition (not far from home!) a herd of 30 fallow were seen, and later, a wonderful view of 4 magnificent red deer stags faced us across a field, then ambled away back towards Grimsthorpe park.

Thanks to the following for their reports: D & J Ball, A & L Biddle, Tim Caldicott, Dr. C Gallimore, P Langstone, Marian Markham, T Mitcham, J & J Morrell,

P Scott and D & S Smalley.



Fox in Jackie Morrells garden. Ridlington



*Water vole raft at weir, Oakham canal. Spot the food pile!
Photo L. Biddle*

MOTHS

RECORDER Paul Bennett

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January, February and March 2021

With few species on the wing in winter, this is always a quiet period and only three reports have been received. A Scarlet Tiger caterpillar was still hibernating in a Manton garden on 15th February, while an Angle Shades and a Buff Ermine would have appreciated the warmth provided by two respective houses in Oakham, the latter found on 14th March and which flew off after 21st. Being a non-hibernating moth, this was a very early record for this species.

Lockdown restrictions were in place for the reporting period, which meant that no trapping was possible at Lyndon, even on the odd occasion when overnight conditions might

otherwise have made it feasible. Hopefully, from mid - April onwards we can enjoy a recording year closer to normal than 2020 permitted.

Thanks to the following for their contributions: P. Bennet, T Caldicott, R. Edwards, J. Harris.

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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Normally, I have nothing to report for this period, but thank you to Tim Caldicott, who spotted a tiny creature in the famous Wing village allotments on 29th March. This is a regular site for this orthopteran, the Slender Groundhopper. The adults of this family can be found throughout most of the year!

Regarding my proposed County Orthoptera book, the draft has finally been published by Leicestershire Entomological Society, Occasional Publication Series. (LESOPS). Editor: Ray Morris. I have already found a printing company in Oakham who are open to negotiations. My next move is to liaise with the National Orthoptera Recording Scheme, based in Wallingford, Oxford to discuss how many copies might be needed but, probably due to the Covid situation, they may have had to temporarily close as I have heard nothing back from them yet.

Groundhoppers

Slender Groundhopper, *Tetrix subulata*

One, observed and photographed, in Wing Village allotments. 29 March. SK889028.



Image supplied by T. Caldicott

INSECTS & INVERTEBRATES

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It doesn't seem possible that I am writing this report for the first quarter of the year and we are still in lockdown. However, as the vaccination programme continues and life starts to return to a 'new normal', let us hope that we may continue to get out and enjoy the beautiful countryside on our doorstep and further afield.

The records submitted so far, reflect the areas close to home, with the warm days that we have had recently bringing out bees, flies and beetles to name a few. Members have sent in some great photographs of their finds which are included in this report below, for you to enjoy.

There has been one record for Ephemeroptera so far this year, of a **Pond Olive**, Cloen dipterum, which was found on a window in an area where there are several garden ponds. This is an early record for a mayfly and may be the result of the few very warm days we had toward the end of March.

Records received for Hemiptera during February and March, include **Green Shieldbug**, *Palomena prasine*, **Blue Shieldbug**, *Zicrona caerulea*, and **Pied Shieldbug**, *Tritomegas bicolor*, with the pied elytra showing very well in the picture below.



Pied shieldbug. Photo T. Caldicott

The earliest record submitted was of a **7-spot ladybird**, *Coccinella septempunctata* which was recorded basking in the sun at the end of January at a property in Oakham. Other ladybird records include **22-spot ladybird** *Psyllobora 22-punctata*, **Harlequin ladybird** *Harmonia axyridis* and **Pine ladybird** *Exochomus 4-pustulatus*, the latter of which was recorded in Manton. Having never knowingly seen a Pine ladybird, it was great to receive a photograph (top right) with the submitted record.

There have only been two records of beetles so far this year, one which was recorded after actively searching through rubble. This was a species of **ground beetle**, *Pterostichus madidus* and after the initial shock of being uncovered, it legged it as fast as it could to escape. Fortunately, it was caught and placed in a petri-dish for identification purposes.

There have been several **Bee Fly**, *Bombylius major* records submitted. I personally have recorded a number recently



Pine ladybird. Photo T. Caldicott

on cold, sunny days visiting the flowers in the garden and basking in the sun on brick walls out of the way of the biting cold, icy winds we have had of late.

Bees have been out and about early, with a good number of species being spotted in cultivated areas in Wing, Manton, Oakham and Exton, with **Buff-tailed Bumblebee**, *Bombus terrestris*, **Honeybee**, *Apis mellifera* being the most common species recorded during February and March. Other records submitted include **Garden Bumblebee**, *Bombus hortorum*, **Early Bumblebee**, *Bombus pratorum* and **Tawny Mining Bee**, *Andrena fulva* which is a lovely looking bee, and we are fortunate to have another excellent photograph to go with this record. **Common Wasp**, *Vespula vulgaris* and *Eristalis tenax* in March.

A record for a Gastropod, the **White Lipped Snail**, *Cepaea hortensis* is included in this report, which was found in Bloody Oaks Quarry in March.

There has been a total of 32 records received for January to March (including the snail) and I would like to thank the following members who have submitted records since the start of the year: *Tim Caldicott, Dave Needham, Roy Lemmon, Diane Masters, Linda Clarke, Rose De Jardin and Jenny Harris.*



Tawny mining bee. Photo R. De Jardin

PLANT GALLS

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January, February and March 2021

There were no reports for this period.

CLIMATE CHANGE, THE PLANET AND US



To play a part in making Britain carbon neutral, RNHS plan to plant trees locally. This is a great step, but those of us who have gardens, however small, can also make a hugely important on-going contribution too: **go peat-free!**

Around the world, 30% of all soil carbon storage occurs in peatlands. The UK's peatlands are an important part of the net storage of carbon, preventing our carbon emissions adding to climate change. They are also important habitats in their own right, with a unique biodiversity that Prince Charles likened to our equivalent of tropical rainforests. Cottongrass, Bog Asphodel and carnivorous plants such as sundews and butterworts thrive in these boggy habitats. Upland bogs are habitats for rare breeding birds such as Short-eared Owl, Curlew and Golden Plover. These upland peatlands alleviate flooding by holding back water, releasing it slowly, while also protecting slopes from erosion by heavy rain.

When damaged, drained or burnt, peatlands leak carbon into the atmosphere, accelerating climate change; precious habitats are lost. One of the major causes of damage is the large-scale 'mining' of peat for use in horticulture as compost and soil improvers, and for growing plants for sale in garden centres.

Everyone who has a garden has a part to play. Our peatlands are being destroyed on a huge scale, but we can help stop it by buying 100% peat-free compost and asking garden centres for plants not grown in peat. Peat for sale in the UK is also sourced from other countries, including tropical habitats, which causes loss of wildlife ecosystems and release of carbon wherever in the world it occurs. Transporting it has a further detrimental effect.

The Co-op sells **WESTLAND New Horizon 100% peat-free** compost, or you could make your own garden compost. Monty Don would be proud of us! Rutland Garden village in Ashwell and Welland Vale nurseries in Uppingham, also sell peat free composts.

To discover more go to:
wildlifetrusts.org/soils-and-carbon (2/2)

To learn how to go peat-free go to:
wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-to-go-peat-free.



Short eared owl. Photo P. Scott



Curlew. Photo P. Scott

PEREGRINES AT ALL SAINT'S OAKHAM AND STAMFORD

It seems our resident Peregrine population are becoming celebrities, with shots being fired all around us in Rutland, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire – photographs that is – on Oakham All Saint's tower (front cover), Stamford All Saint's (photo's below), St. Dionysius in Market Harborough and of course the 'Des res' - Leicester Cathedral! Some people of

the past, however, have aimed shots of a different kind at our countryside wildlife. Large numbers of Peregrine were shot during the 2nd World War because it was thought they were a threat to the carrier pigeons that were used as messenger birds in the war. How the tables have turned! Let us hope they breed successfully this year.



Peregrine falcon. Stamford All Saint's. Photo D. Cotter

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