



Pasque flowers at dawn, Barnack Hills and holes. Photo D Cotter

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At last! Spring arrived, better late than never, and as we knew it would in a burst of new life so fast that it is difficult to appreciate everything coming together. Violets and Primroses are still flowering with Lady's Smock and Early Purple Orchids alongside them. Brimstones and Holly Blues are flying, and all the usual migrant birds are singing fit to burst, to catch up on lost time in the all too short breeding period. Let's make the most of the birdsong too, before they quieten down.

RNHS members are out and about looking at what's around, so do keep on sending in your interesting observations to Recorders, by whatever method suits you best, paper or digital.

The March visit to Great Merrible was an interesting change (see page 9), and we had a successful outing to see Pasque flowers at Barnack (see page 9, and above) in spite of the cold damp weather. The cowslips were magnificent, as they have been all over the county this year – there are a few benefits to a wet late spring!

We were blessed with perfect weather for the Dawn Chorus and had a wonderful morning, so look forward to Cribbs meadow later this month, and Seaton Meadows, the Allerton Project and Robert's Field in June. Hope to see you there!

Natural History Museum, visit on 20th November

Keep this date in your diary! Make your own way to the NHM for a behind-the-scenes tour at 11.30 am (£10), with the rest of the day free to wander the galleries (see the informative website, <http://www.nhm.ac.uk>, and there is an App). The



A newly discovered species of leaf beetle, *Metallactus londonpridei*. (London Pride is the flagship beer of Fuller's Brewery, made in the city since the 1950s.) Photo Davide Sassi.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition will be on (£13.50, or £12.50 online).

Numbers are limited for the tour so please contact Linda Biddle beforehand (contact details, see back page), also to see if car-sharing or train-travelling can be co-ordinated, and to explore other possibilities at the NHM.

Amongst other gems from the NHM website: 'A Brazilian beetle in the genus *Metallactus* has been named after an ale. Entomologist Davide Sassi, who discovered it in the NHM's collections, says the beetle is 'dedicated to the excellent beer which inspired some lovely evening meditations during visits to the Natural History Museum'. Let's try it!

Linda Biddle RNHS Chair

Rutland Natural History Society 2019 Calendar



RNHS Calendar 2018, February, Kingfisher by Roger Favell (overall winner)

This year I hope you are using the RNHS 2018 calendar, a first for the RNHS. It was the result of a photographic competition in 2017, was put together by Linda Biddle, it includes RNHS events – very useful – and the sales covered its costs.

We are looking to do this again in 2018 in order to produce a calendar for 2019. We are asking you to send in a wide selection of photographs – see rules below – from which we can choose the best ones for the calendar AND also to form part of the December 4 meeting, as last year.

Rules are:

- 1 Three entries per participant, with a short description and/or caption for each, including date and place.
- 2 High resolution photos so as to support quality printing. (Landscape photos are more likely to be chosen for the calendar.)
- 3 Content to be general views of Rutland, or wildlife photos ideally taken in Rutland. However if wildlife has been photographed outside Rutland but is in fact **found** in Rutland, that will be acceptable. (A photo of a bird in breeding plumage which in fact is only a winter visitor to Rutland would not be ok.)
- 4 DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 7!

Send your photographs to me at peter.scott27@btopenworld.com, or if you would like to discuss this further, please use my mobile 07535 508932.

We hope this year that more members will participate in order to cover the widest range of topics as possible – we always have plenty of bird and butterfly photographs but not enough caterpillars, moths, amphibians, wild flowers, trees

Please remember to be sympathetic to the subject matter and do not disturb nest sites, roost sites, etc.

Rutland Natural History Website

I am also keen to get members to look at the website and to increase its usage, so if you have time please google RNHS and you should find that our homepage pops up for you to access, then just click on one of the headings to bring up other pages you can investigate.

Hope to see you at the outdoor meetings, and at the first indoor meeting on October 2 – the Phil and Dave extravaganza.

Peter Scott Website Editor

Fieldfare and the website

If you are reading this *Fieldfare* on paper, the photos on pages 3-14 are in black and white. To see them in colour, go to the website, click on 'Annual Reports and meetings', then on the 'Newsletter archive'. See how much better the Large Conehead on page 13 looks.

Hendrina Ellis Fieldfare Editor

GLOW-WORM call from Linda Worrall

I so hope someone will find a glow-worm this year! Please send me an e-mail, or ring. I'm not driving, but could I suggest you try Ketton Quarry? Thanks, Linda

Contact Linda on:

01572 747302

e-mail: worrall6redland@talktalk.net

Glow-worm. Photo, P Scott



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.

Friday 8 June, 2.00 pm

Seaton Meadows

Joe Costley, *Plantlife* warden, leads the annual visit to Rutland's Coronation meadow, which is also a SSSI. Joe says: 'I am the manager of the site, so am biased, but think it is a wonderful site for its intricate mix of flush, floodplain and dry grassland communities, its historic ridge and furrow and the wonderful backdrop of the Welland Viaduct which bisects the site – the longest brick viaduct in Britain. It is the last surviving species-rich meadow in the Welland Valley, so of great importance and cultural significance for this reason.' From Harringworth towards Seaton, take the first right towards Morcott, park up after 200 m under the viaduct (map ref: SP913980).

Queries: Jenny Harris, 01572 755274 / 07897 123566

Tuesday 12 June, 6.15 pm

The Allerton Project, Loddington

Jim Egan of the Allerton Project, who gave a talk to the Society last December, will show us round this research centre. The Allerton Project's aims are to research the effects of different farming methods on wildlife and the environment, and to share the results of this research through educational activities. Meet at the Manor Farm Visitor Centre, Loddington (postcode LE79XE) which is off the A47 north into East Norton. Turn right at T junction. The Visitor Centre is on left at lefthand bend. Wear suitable footwear – may be rough ground. Queries: Dave Cotter, 07887 392308

Sunday 24 June, 10.30 am

Roberts Field

This is a Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust SSSI reserve, just over the border from Rutland. There should be many characteristic limestone plants such as Pyramidal Orchid, Clustered Bellflower, Autumn Gentian and Rock-rose. There are still a few of the grassland butterflies and it is a noted inland site for the Green Hairstreak.

From Clipsham turn right towards Holywell, then turn right to Pickworth. Roberts Field is on your left. Park on roadside. Map ref: TF000150. There are plans to visit another reserve, if time, to be announced later, see website.

Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108, 0774 9636919

Sunday 8 July, 10 am

Woodwalton Fen (the Great Fen Project)

Led by Henry Stanier, BCNWT Monitoring and Research Officer, in his youth a keen member of RNHS. Woodwalton Fen is part of the Great Fen Project. It was bought by Lord Rothschild in 1910 to add to Wicken Fen which he had already donated to the National Trust, Holme Fen is nearby and more fenland is still being acquired. More information on this exciting project at <http://www.greatfen.org.uk>.

Meet at workshop across entrance bridge, in front of information board. Approx postcode PE262RS, map ref: TL23456 84881. Find Chapel Road, Ramsey Heights (satnav may list Heights Drove road). Turn right before bridge for free parking along Great Ravely drain. Please do not drive over bridge.

Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108, 0774 9636919

Sunday 12 August, 10.30 am

Insects at Ketton Quarry

With RNHS Butterfly Recorder Richard Brown and RNHS Insect Recorder Gill Chiverton. Full details in July *Fieldfare*, and on website.

RNHS EVENING MEETINGS

Indoor meetings will start again in the autumn on October 2. They 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.

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST, RUTLAND GROUP

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

LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST, BOURNE GROUP

For details of all 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. Refreshments available. A donation of £1.50 is requested, children free.

WEATHER

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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

March 2018

An account by Roy Lemmon of 'The weather journals of a Rutland squire' has had to be held over till July because of lack of space.

It features Thomas Barker, 1722–1809, of Lyndon Hall, and follows on from Roy's previous account of 'Gilbert White, the Rutland connection', March *Fieldfare* page 4. It is a fascinating piece of local history. Plus an intriguing explanation of the Stevenson screen.

Does anyone know of a painting of Thomas Barker? Please contact the FF Editor.

Atmospheric pressure and wind A markedly low pressure month, on only four days in the 31 did the pressure exceed 1017 mb, the lowest, 988 mb, occurred on both the 6th and the 12th. Both wind direction and speed were very variable, the first two days were NE–E and gusty and there was a period, the 14th–29th, when speeds were again high. On the last days it was calm and winds were S–W.

Temperature A cold March, the 2nd coldest in the decade 2009–2018, after March 2013 which was exceptionally cold. This year the 1st was very cold with a daytime maximum of -1.2°C , and a north easterly wind which was gusty. That day's night-time minimum was -4.0°C , the lowest I registered in the month. In all there were 12 nights when the temperature was 0°C or less. The 17th and 18th were cold with daytime maxima of 3.1°C and 1.4°C respectively.

Rain A very wet March, the total here was 95.2 mm (3.75 inches) which represents 243% of the long-term mean, and is the wettest March by a considerable margin since my records began. This fell as snow on the 1st and 2nd as a result of the conjunction of very cold air from Siberia (aka 'the beast from the East'), and storm Emma from the Atlantic. On only seven days in the month was no precipitation recorded.

A wet winter I was asked recently by a fellow member of the RNHS whether we had had a wet winter. This caused me to do the calculation and the answer is 'yes'. The total for December–February inclusive is 161.9 mm (6.37 inches) which is 119% of my LTM.

April 2018

Atmospheric pressure and wind Apart from the period 18th–21st inclusive, this was a low pressure month, the lowest I recorded being 992 mb on the 3rd at 09.00. The highest was 1026 mb on the 18th and during this time winds were SW, but for the majority of the month they were NE–E with correspondingly low temperatures, as the North Sea is still cold at this time of year.

Temperature A disparate set of mean values this month, the overall mean, 10.26°C , places April 2018 third in the decade 2009–2018; but the mean maximum, 14.52°C , was sixth and the mean minimum, 6.00°C , was second! This reflects the fact that there were no frosts in the month although the last night was close at 0.7°C . The high pressure period referred to above gave us the highest daytime maximum of 28.5°C , but this is of course in a relatively sheltered position.

Rain A wet April, a total of 82.8 mm (3.26 inches) is 187.5% of my long-term mean. 63% of the total fell in the first half of the month. Looking back, April 2017 had only 13.7 mm of rainfall and April 2011 just 2.3 mm. April 2012 however had 150.2 mm, close to 6 inches!

Sunshine I have no figures for this but noted that between the 9th and 13th inclusive there was heavy cloud, no sun and mist at times. There were other days like this.



Scarlet Elf Cap, Society visit to Great Merrible Wood, March 24. See page 9. Photo, A Biddle

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 2018



Frogs, March 2018. Photo, D Cotter

The somewhat sub-standard spring resulted in a bit of a hiatus between the early activity in February and the bulk of **Frog** activity that did not occur until late March. Otherwise there was a reasonable spread of records of all species except for Slow Worm.

After the early frog spawn in Barrowden on 17th February, there was no further spawning until 8th March, although the main activity was on 10th March with additional clumps appearing over the ensuing two weeks. A single clump in Wing on 13th March was the first evidence of spawning elsewhere. Most reports of frog spawn were in the last week of March in Exton, Oakham, Wing and Rutland Water Nature Reserve, although spawn was still appearing in Little Casterton and Exton in mid-April, by which time tadpoles were being seen in Oakham and Barrowden. Two oxbow ponds on the River Chater in Wing had no spawn for the first time that I can recall, although as the Chater flooded on more than one occasion in the crucial period it is possible that any spawn was washed away. Similarly a favourite spawning site on the Nature Reserve was devoid of spawn following herpetologically unfriendly management, although adjacent dykes had more spawn than usual – but only about half the norm for that area.

The first **Common Toads** were seen at Leighfield on 11th March and they were recorded in amplexus in Tunneley Wood on 6th April. They were also heard calling at Leighfield later in the month. Elsewhere single toads were seen in Wing and at Prior's Coppice later in the month.

Smooth Newts were present in low numbers in both months in a couple of ponds in Wing and several dead ones were found in a pond in Barrowden in April. Tim Appleton and I examined 21 ponds in Rutland Water Nature Reserve on 23rd April and 3rd May, and found Smooth Newts in 9 of them, in one of which they had not previously been found.

Great Crested Newts were present in my pond in Wing in both months with a maximum count of 18 on 14th March. There were also records from Exton and Thorpe-by-Water. Disappointingly there were only two ponds at Rutland Water that yielded this species.

Viviparous Lizards were seen on 16th and 18th April at Ketton Quarry and Pickworth Drift.

There was only one March **Grass Snake** record on 22nd at Leighfield. A Grass Snake was seen on 18th April basking by a track in Wing near the River Chater. Four days later a dead snake was found by the bridge over the Chater in Wing Hollow, which may well have been the same individual.

Adders were seen at Ketton Quarry on March 16th and April 16th.

My thanks to the following who sent records: T Appleton, T Caldicott, R Edwards, M Grimes, V Hemsley, A Hill, P Langston, A Lawrence, T Mitcham, G Williams, D Needham, P Scott and L Worrall.

BIRDS

RECORDER Terry Mitcham

*30 Sutherland Way, Stamford PE9 2TB. Telephone: 01780 751268
E-mail: joterpat@btinternet.com*

March/April 2018

Cold weather in March brought less usual species into some gardens, whilst high water levels limited wader passage at the reservoirs. Overwintering grebes and divers remained into April, as did Rutland Water's American Wigeon. Most spring migrants arrived on cue but in reduced numbers, with a very early Nightingale at Rutland Water. Unexpected visitors were a Crane, an Arctic Skua and a Fulmar, the latter on one of the sunnier and calmer days in April – a totally disorientated bird!

My thanks to the following for their records: T Appleton, D Ball, C Baxter, P Bennett, A & L Biddle, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, P & M Coughlan, Dr C H Gallimore, M & G Griffin, J Harris, B Hibbitt, T Land, P Langston, A Lawrence, LROS, R Lemmon, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, T Moffat, B Moore, J & M Nourish, J S & J Rodgers, RWNR, P Scott, L Worrall.

(See also Wildfowl Counts, page 10).

Whooper Swan	12 were at RWEg on 01.03 and 40+8 flew north there on 24.03.
Pink-footed Goose	One was at RWEg from 27.03 to at least 10.04.
White-fronted Goose	The four remained at RWNA to 23.03 and were seen again at FHP next day.
Shelduck	Three flew over Leigh on 11.03 with two at LFP between 18–31.03. Five were at FHP between 16–29.03.
Mandarin Duck	Very well reported with pairs or singles noted throughout both months at the following sites: Wg/Pilt, RWNorm, TunnW, Greet GC, FHP and near Pick.
Wigeon	Flooded fields at Cott had 61 on 17.03 and four on 15.04.
American Wigeon	The RWEg male was present to 19.04.
Garganey	A male was at RWEg between 25–27.04.
Red-crested Pochard	Three were at RWSA on 15 and 17.03 and one at Eg on 25.04.
Pochard	Nine were at LFP on 25.03.
Scaup	Present at RW throughout March to 03.04 with a peak of 11 on 20.03. A female was present on 21 and 27.04.
Common Scoter	Noted at RWSA/NA on seven dates between 19.03 and 17.04, with a max of nine on 14.04, when there were 18 at EBR.
Goldeneye	A male was in RWSA on 16.04.
Smew	Noted at EBR to 10.03, when ten were present. At RW there was a max of 13 on 07.03, with five on 27.03 the final report.
Goosander	Two were on the R Welland at Stam on 09.03. A female was at RWEg on 07.04 and a female was at LFP on 14.04.
Great Northern Diver	Up to three remained at RW throughout March to 06.04, with one seen to the end of April.
Fulmar	One passed west at RW on 21.04 – a warm and calm day.
Little Egret	Singles were at Greet GC on 17.03, Geest on 26.03, FHP on 24.03, with one at LFP next day. Seven were at EBR on 26.04.
Great White Egret	One was at EBR on 07–08.04.
Red-necked Grebe	The RWSA bird was last reported on 26.03.
Slavonian Grebe	A bird in non-breeding plumage was at RWSA between 24.03 and 05.04, and one almost in breeding plumage was at the dam there between 03 and 10.04.
Black-necked Grebe	One remained in RWNA to 27.03, with two between 30.03–03.04 and one to 07.04.
Marsh Harrier	One was at RW on 31.03 and 03.04.
Sparrowhawk	Garden records came from Barrow, Stam, Oak and Upp, where one caught and ate a Dunnock on 27.03.
Osprey	The Lyndon female returned on 12.03. Six were back by 20.03. One was seen over Ext on 22.03, carrying a fish, and one flew NE over Pilt on 24.03.
Water Rail	Singles were seen at LFP on 07 and 11.03.
Coot	A colour-ringed bird (white CTS) seen at RWEg on 23.03 had been ringed there in Dec 2015 and seen there in July 2016.
Crane	One flew over RWEg on 13.04.
Avocet	Present at RWeg from 10.03 with three, and again between 15–19.04 but usually one reported.
Oystercatcher	Nos at RW increased from 21 on 18.03 to 49 on 17.04. Two flew over Wg on 07.04 and singles were heard/seen at LFP on 08 and 14.04.
Grey Plover	One was at RWEg on 31.03.
Golden Plover	One called over Leigh on 14.04.

Lapwing	There were 21 at RW on 18.03 and 32 on 17.04. Breeding behaviour noted at RW and at Wg Burrows on 25.03.
Little Ringed Plover	Noted only at RWEg with one on 27 and 29.03, two on 31.03 and one on 26.04.
Ringed Plover	One heard over Leigh on 11.03. At RW one or two were noted from 19.03 to 21.04, when migrants began moving through in force with 20 on 25.04 and 37 on 27.04.
Whimbrel	Singles noted at RWEg between 18 and 26.04, with four at the dam on 23.04, when one flew over BW.
Curlew	One flew south over LFP on 16.03. There were 12 at RW on 18.03. Heard regularly in the Barrow area in both months. In the Leigh area one or two were heard regularly from 26.03 to 19.04, and one flew SW there on 29.04.
Black-tailed Godwit	Four were at RW on 21.04, with one next day.
Bar-tailed Godwit	One was at RWEg between 17–20.04.
Turnstone	One was at RWEg between 19–21.04.
Ruff	There were 12 at RWEg on 18.04 and ten next day.
Curlew Sandpiper	One was at RWEg on 21.04.
Sanderling	One was at RWEg on 13.04.
Dunlin	Up to three were at RW between 19.03 and 21.04, with 13 on 25.04, and c.20 on 26.04.
Knot	One was found dead in RWNA on 05.03.
Common Sandpiper	Two were at EBR on 15.04, with two at RWEg on 26 and 29.04, and three next day.
Spotted Redshank	One was heard calling over Leigh on 19.04.
Greenshank	Singles were at RWEg on 13 and 21.04.
Wood Sandpiper	One was at RWEg on 21.04.
Redshank	Now well established at RWEg, there were two on 18.03 and 14 on 17.04. Display was noted on 29.04.
Woodcock	Last noted on 30.03, there were some good counts in the month with six in TunnW on 10 and eight on 24. Four were at BCF on 11.03, and one or two were at Pilt, CottW and Leigh.
Snipe	Three were at BCF on 11.03 and at Banthorpe GP on 13 and 26.03. Nine were at RW on 18.03. Singles were near WG on 01 and 29.03.
Arctic Skua	A dark morph adult passed through at RW dam on 08.04.
Sandwich Tern	One was at RW on 18.04.
Common Tern	Three were back at RWEg on 15.04, with seven on 18.04 and c.40 over SA on 29.04.
Arctic Tern	Singles were at RW on 14, 21 and 25.04, with c.45 over SA on 29.04.
Kittiwake	At RW there were two on 13.03.
Little Gull	Apart from six at EBR on 15.04, all records (of up to five birds) were from RW between 03.04 and 22.04 with a peak of nine on 15.04.
Mediterranean Gull	An adult was at EBR on 05.03. A second-summer bird, ringed as a chick at Bielinek in Poland in May 2016, was present in the Black-headed Gull colony at RWEg from 25.03 to the end of April.
Stock Dove	One was in an Ext garden on 19.03, and one or two fed in an Oak garden in April.
Cuckoo	One singing in BW from 18.04 to 26.04 was our first record. Song also noted at PGW on 27.04 and GreetWFar next day.
Barn Owl	Well reported from eight county wide sites. At least three of our checked nestboxes are occupied. Sadly, a chick ringed at Geest in Aug 2016 was found dead at Norm on 11.03.
Short-eared Owl	One was at RWEg on 10.03.
Little Owl	Noted at Belm, Upp and Barrow.
Tawny Owl	Records came from the Mor/Seaton road, BW and Leigh, where two were seen on 19.04. One was flushed in WestlandW and calling birds were heard in Barrow . Two occupied nestboxes in Ext Park.

Swift	The first report was from RW on 20.04, with small nos to the end of the month: 12 on 25.04 and four next day. Two were at EBR on 26.04 and two at FHP on 28.04.
Green Woodpecker	Reports came from FHP, Ext Park woodlands, Greet GC, Banthorpe GP, Barrow and Upp.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Drumming birds continued to be well recorded with birds at nine sites. Garden feeders were visited at BCF, Ext and Oak in March.
Kestrel	Pairs noted at HM and Norm, with an occupied nestbox in Ext Park. One roosted on a house roof at Wg on 04.04.
Hobby	One over Sounding Bridge on 18.04 was the first record. Singles at RW (20), BW (21) and Stam (30) were also reported.
Peregrine	One flew south at Man on 08.03, and one was at Leigh on 16.04.
Ring-necked Parakeet	One flew east over Ashwell Rd, Oak on 09.04. Possibly last autumn's Barleythorpe bird?
Jay	Two fed at an Emp bird table in both months. Regularly heard in Ext Park woods and three flew high over Leigh on 25.04.
Rook	For the first time since the BCF Common Birds Census was started in 1992, none are nesting at the farm. Other rookeries I have checked also seem to be less active this year. Have these birds just relocated elsewhere? Have other members noticed this apparent decline?
Raven	Overflying birds were noted at Banthorpe GP and Oak. 13 were noted over Leigh on 13.03 and four regular nest sites seem to be in use.
Goldcrest	One was watched attacking its reflection in a house window in Wg on 11.04.
Firecrest	One was reported in song at BW on 23.04.
Marsh Tit	Noted only in TunnW and at Gorse Close, RW.
Willow Tit	Calling or singing birds noted at LFP, Pilt, Leigh and Rid.
Sand Martin	First seen at RW on 12.03, with low nos throughout March and not seen at FHP until 10.04.
Swallow	First reported from RW on 27.03 with two there on 03.04. Returned briefly to a regular nesting site at Bden on 15.04.
House Martin	One at RWEg on 03.04 was the first with one there next day. Three were at EBR on 11.04. A slow arrival with few noted by the end of April.
Cetti's Warbler	Few seem to have survived the winter at RWEg, with one singing on 29.04 the only record.
Chiffchaff	Early song was heard at LFP on 16.03 and at Leigh on 22.03. Four were there on 29.03. March song also noted at PGW and FHP. 43 were singing in BW on 18.04.
Willow Warbler	One at RWEg was the first on 03.04 with the next at FH on 10.04. Thinly but widely distributed by the end of April.
Blackcap	Singles fed in Oak and Upp gardens in early March (to 03) with one remaining at Oak to the end of the month. Song was not reported until 05.04, at Leigh.
Garden Warbler	Present at RWEg from 20.04, with one at BW the next day and three there on 23.04.
Lesser Whitethroat	One singing at Leigh on 16.04 was the first, with six there by 22.04. Four sang near Wg on 20.04 and there were subsequent records from EBR, RWVTC and FHP.
Whitethroat	One at Pilt was the first record with birds at BCF, Pick and QF from 26.04.
Grasshopper Warbler	One sang at BW on 18 and 21.04, and one at RWVTC on 27.04.
Sedge Warbler	One singing at RWEg on 07.04 was the first with three there on 09.04. One was singing at EBR on 26.04.
Ring Ouzel	Singles passed through RWLynd on 06 and 16.04.
Fieldfare	Cold weather in early March brought singles to two Oak gardens on 04, with two in a Stam garden on 18.03. c.100 flew NW at Leigh on 01.04, seven were over Ext on 06.04, and the last were two near Pilt on 15.04.
Redwing	There were two at Norm on 04.03 and c.20 foraged in snow at RWEg on 18.03. Two were at BCF on 25.03, and the last was one over Leigh on 14.04.

Nightingale	One at RWEg on 08.04 was the earliest ever arrival in the county . Two were singing there on 27.04 and one was heard at another site on 28.04.
Redstart	A female was near Wg on 20.04, and one was heard nearby on 25.04.
Whinchat	One was at Luff Airfield on 25.04.
Wheatear	Five at Luff Airfield on 01.04 were the first with five there also on 05.04. One or two were at RW dam and Eg, Greet GC and Cott Airfield between 05.04 and 29.04.
Tree Sparrow	Up to four fed in an Ext garden between 06 and 27.03. Up to four also noted at Leigh between 09/11.03.
Yellow Wagtail	This once common migrant is now very scarce. One was at RWEg between 02–05.04. Five flew over Leigh on 14.04, with four on 25.04. 24 were at the RW dam on 20.04, with one there on 23.04.
White Wagtail	All records were from RWEg in April, with five on 04, two on 14 and one on 16.
Tree Pipit	One was heard over Leigh on 22.04.
Meadow Pipit	Spring passage at Leigh produced flocks of c.50 on 13 and 25.03, 86 on 26.03 and c.120 on 14.04.
Rock Pipit	One was at RWEg on 17.03.
Chaffinch	200 were at Leigh on 09.03 with a max of 100 on nearby game crops on 13.03.
Brambling	Up to ten (09.03) were noted in the Leigh/ Pilt and Martinthorpe areas between 09 and 31.03, with 9 near Wg on 29.03. One was at RWLynd on 31.03. One or two frequented feeders at Man between 01 and 11.04. 19 flew from a roost near Wg on 06/07.04, 2 were at Leigh on 14.04 and 2 were at Berrybutts Spinney on 17.04.
Hawfinch	Singles were noted on three dates between 09 and 22.03 at Leigh, with one over Pilton on 24.03. One was over Leigh on 05.04.
Crossbill	One was over Leigh on 07.03.
Siskin	An Oak garden attracted birds from 01.03 to 13.04, with a max of 6 on three March dates. In an Ext garden there were 2 on 11.03 and one on 25.03, whilst a Stam garden had 7 on 08.04.
Linnet	About 80 were around Leigh from 14.04 to 25.04.
Lesser Redpoll	An Oak garden attracted one or two from 02.03 to 13.04, with three on 27.03. Singles were at an Ext feeder on 24.03 and at Norm on 08.04. One flew over Leigh on 22.04 and two over BW on 26.04.
Reed Bunting	One or two visited three Oak gardens and gardens in Ext and Stam between 04.03 and 27.03.

RNHS visits in March and April (full reports on website)

Great Merrible Wood, March 24

The afternoon was cool and overcast when we began a walk around LRWT's Great Merrible Wood, led by LRWT Conservation Officer, Andy Lear. The wood overlooks the Eyebrook Reservoir. Although the spring season had been delayed and little flowering botany or birds were observed, we found plenty of woodland botany at early stages of development. Notable along the ride floors were large numbers of Scarlet Elf Caps (see page 4) which showed up vividly. Dog's Mercury and the first Primroses were in early bloom. The leaves of Arum Lily were obvious and Hard Shield Fern was growing. Most of the woodland is on boulder clay but occasional Wild Privet was growing on areas of more calcareous soil.

The only birds heard were Blue and Great Tits, Robin, Blackbird and Chaffinch along with the chack of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker.

Anthony Biddle

Barnack Hills and Holes, April 29

The changeable weather brought a grey cold day. Cowslips were everywhere, and also very numerous were the small yellow brown flowers of False Fox Sedge. We followed the marked path across the Reserve and found many Pasque flowers (see cover photo, in better weather!), looking a bit sorry for themselves in the cold. Here too we found many Early Purple Orchids.

Further on were Dog's Mercury, Garlic Mustard, Black Bryony, Ground Ivy, Bluebells and False Oxlip (a hybrid of Cowslip and Primrose). A week before, we had found Orangetip, Brimstone and Peacock butterflies but there were none today. Phil identified the melancholy song of a Mistlethrush, amongst others. A little later in the spring there will be more orchids – including man and frog orchids – and yellow rockroses too. Well worth another visit.

J S Rodgers, Botany Recorder

Wildfowl Counts for March and April 2018

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir		Fort Henry Ponds /Exton Park		Banthorpe Gravel Pit		Holywell Lake
	18.3	17.4	18.3	17.4	16.3	15.4	16.3	16.4	15.3
Mute Swan	127	209	40	33	9	11	1	2	2
Pink-footed Goose		1							
White-fronted Goose	4								
Greylag Goose	355	215	25	12	3	12	36	17	
Canada Goose	144	99	30	3					25
Barnacle Goose	2	1							
Egyptian Goose	17	35				2			
Shelduck	21	49		1	5	2			
Mandarin Duck	2	1			1				
Wigeon	1842	16	684		141	2			40
American Wigeon	1	1							
Gadwall	213	101	2	25	49	24			21
Teal	126	61	64	25	3	7	52	7	12
Mallard	279	243	12	21	75	48	10	1	30
Pintail	8	3							
Shoveler	33	50			6	2			
Red-crested Pochard	4								
Pochard	44	12	4						
Tufted Duck	936	648	26		56	54			12
Scaup	10								
Common Scoter		1							
Goldeneye	205	4	16						
Smew	6								
Goosander	1								
Ruddy Duck		1							
Great Northern Diver	2								
Cormorant	110	109			1			1	
Little Egret		5		2					1
Grey Heron	3	8					1		1
Little Grebe	37	5			1				12
Great Crested Grebe	131	118	21	30	1				
Black-necked Grebe	1								
Water Rail	8								
Moorhen	38	49		1	6	5	1		11
Coot	508	191	7	1	54	39			9
Kingfisher									1

BOTANY

RECORDER John Rodgers

8 Summerfield, Oakham LE15 6PZ. Telephone: 01572 757278
E-mail: rnhsbotanyrecord@gmail.com

March/April 2018

I'm always surprised how quickly the countryside changes from bare trees and plain green, or even brown, fields into a torrent of white in the hedgerows, many different greens on the trees and, of course, yellow fields of rape as springs settles into being. This year Merry's Meadows rivals the rape fields with a dense carpet of **Cowslip**, with **Green-winged Orchids** just appearing too. There are swathes of blue in the woods, with Hambleton Wood showing a blue white and yellow canvas as **Greater Stitchwort** and **Yellow Archangel** mingle with the **Bluebells**.

Elsewhere there is **Red Campion**, **Danish Scurvy Grass**, **Cow Parsley**, many more **Cowslips** and **Primroses**, whilst **Ramsons** can be seen and smelt at Lyndon. **Marsh Marigolds** and **Common Fritillaries** can be seen in their usual place at Egleton, and **Common Twayblade** is in Pickworth Great Wood. There are no reports of the latter at Ketton Quarry, as yet.

Two more unusual flowers are reported. **Greater Cuckooflower** and **Alkanet** are both found by the Chater between Manton and Wing, together with **Early Purple Orchid** and **Stinking Hellebore**. The latter have been reported from time to time, but the first two are uncommon and haven't been recorded in the recent past.

Records were received from: C Baxter, A & L Biddle, T Caldecott, M Grimes, R Lemmon, J Mallet, D Needham, J S & J Rodgers, P Rudkin.

BUTTERFLIES

RECORDER Richard Brown

10 Victoria Road, Stamford PE9 1HR. Telephone: 01780 590707
E-mail: ribrow@hotmail.co.uk

March/April 2018

Local observations

To the end of April 2018 I have received observations of just eight species, in date order as follows: Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Comma, Peacock, Holly Blue, Orange Tip, Large White and Red Admiral.

Given the weather, you will not be surprised that this total is well below the eleven species observed before the end of April 2017. The slow start to the season is made even more striking by the following table showing the first date of observation for the first five species in 2016, 2017 and 2018. This year we are fully a month behind last year's dates.

2016		2017		2018	
Small Tort	20 Mar	Small Tort	03 Feb	Brimstone	16 Mar
Brimstone	20 Mar	Brimstone	03 Feb	Comma	16 Mar
Comma	31 Mar	Red Admiral	04 Feb	Small Tort	16 Mar
Orange Tip	10 Apr	Peacock	07 Feb	Peacock	21 Mar
Peacock	10 Apr	Comma	09 Mar	Large White	19 Apr

As usual the earliest observations include the native species that overwinter as adults – that is, Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma. In recent winters some Red Admirals, strictly speaking incoming migrants and thus expected to arrive later in the season, have been managing to overwinter in the UK and thus appear early among the native over-wintering species – see 2017. However this year I have just one Red Admiral observation so far, as late as 19th April.

Back from the Brink

Members will remember Susannah O’Riordan’s talk about this project, a major part of which involves the re-introduction of the Chequered Skipper into Rockingham Forest, particularly into Fineshade Woods. Latest information is that re-introduction will be attempted in May/June this year. That will be 42 years since this butterfly was last observed – in Rutland! – in England. You can follow progress on the website naturebtfb.co.uk.

Thanks to D & J Ball, C Baxter, T Caldicott, M Grimes, C R Jones, R Lemmon, D Masters, T Mitcham, D Needham, P Scott and L Worrall

MOTHS

RECORDER Paul Bennett

*90 Kesteven Rd, Stamford PE9 1SR. Telephone: 01780 754 569
E-mail: p.bennett569@btinternet.com*

March/April 2018

The early spring period is often a frustrating time for moth recording and this year has been especially so, but despite this interesting records have been received. The highlight undoubtedly was a **Small Eggar** found in a Morcott garden trap, this is a Nationally Scarce species mainly recorded in south-west England in small numbers and rarely in traps, and is a first Rutland record almost since records began. The fact that it survived the Siberian weather and was seen near the end of its flight period as a clearly identifiable moth made it even more remarkable – the hope of finding something rare is the reason why many of us moth trap! What is also unusual about this moth is that its preferred larval foodplants of blackthorn and hawthorn are locally common which only deepens its mystery.

At Lyndon we only had the opportunity to trap on one occasion and had to settle for more modest fare, although a total of 30 moths and 9 species was reasonable for early April. These included 3 species of **Quaker** moths, a **Pine Beauty**, **Engrailed** and **Early Thorn** in addition to the regular spring emergers **Hebrew Character** and **Clouded Drab**. Other records received were of an **Oak Beauty**, one of the most attractive spring moths, and a **Red Chestnut**, which were both recorded in an Edith Weston garden; and an **Early Grey** was also seen in a garden in Oakham.

Larvae records were of a **Drinker** at Merry’s Meadows and **Scarlet Tiger** in Edith Weston. The latter is a day-flying summer moth and can also be found in traps so it would be good to receive future records of this, which have been conspicuous by their absence in recent years.

The harsh late winter weather probably kept moths sheltered and less vulnerable to predators but more problematic for them will have been the recent cold and damp conditions and one can only hope that there is no knock-on effect on numbers later in the year.

For bibliophiles, two future books worth mentioning are the national atlas of larger moths due out around the end of this year, and a book on the butterflies and moths of Leicestershire and Rutland, which is beginning to be worked on by the county recorder. Both of these promise to be weighty tomes, the latter having over 800,000 records on the database as a starting point – but the recorder and myself are greedy for more before the scheduled 2020 publication.

Thanks to the following for submitting their records: V Arnold, P Bennett, D Cole, R Edwards, M Grimes, P Scott.

PLANT GALLS

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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

March/April 2018

A slow start to the season, probably due to the cold Spring; March 2017 had 9 records, this March – nil.

The first records this year were from Pickworth on the 19th and comprised 3 on Oak, all caused by gall wasps, one on Shepherds' Purse caused by what was originally a fungus but now has been re-mustered into the Chromista, and the fifth a rust on Bramble. Merry's Meadows on the 26th produced a rust galler on Creeping Thistle, and Bloody Oaks Quarry on the same day had another rust galler on Sweet Violet and a leaf-curling mite gall on Spindle.

Along with virtually everything in the natural world this year, rusts – galls or not – seem to be very slow to appear.

Thanks to M Grimes and R Lemmon

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

10 Brooke Avenue, Stamford, PE9 2RU. Telephone: 01780 762998
E-mail: phil.rudkin@talktalk.net

March/April 2018

With the season being so cold and late, there was only one sighting this period: two nymphs of the **Dark Bush Cricket**, see below.



Great Green Bush Cricket

This gives me the opportunity to ponder over the possibility of newcomers to Rutland, of our orthopteran species. I have written previously of the non-appearance of the **Great Green Bush Cricket**, *Tettigonia viridissima*. It has been on our borders in Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire for many years, but seems reluctant to venture into the beautiful Rutland countryside. There are two more species that are close, and well worth looking out for: **Southern Oak Bush Cricket**, *Meconema meridionale*. Naturalist Brian Laney discovered this cricket in Northamptonshire in 2016, so it would be excellent if one appeared in Rutland. The other is also a cricket: the **Large Conehead**, *Ruspolia nitidula*. This is a wonderful beast, a very large relative of our Long-winged and Short-winged Coneheads, with an amazing stridulating song; there have been occasional reports over the years.



Large Conehead

In August 2015, a flourishing colony of **Tree Crickets**, *Oecanthus pellucens*, was found at Dungeness, another 'possible' arrival in our county? What will season 2018 bring us?

Bush Crickets

Dark Bush Cricket, *Pholidoptera griseoaptera*

Two nymphs, observed by Tim Caldicott. Burley Woods, Compartment 27, SK894096. 26 April.

OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES

RECORDER Gill Chiverton

20 Victoria Road, Stamford PE9 1HB. Telephone: 01780 753820
E-mail: gill.chiverton@googlemail.com

Odonata DAMSELFLIES

Large Red Damselfly
Pyrrhosoma nymphula

April One noted in a Barrowden garden

Hemiptera BUGS


Green Shieldbug
Paloma prasina

April One seen in winter colouring in Oakham garden

Coleoptera BEETLES

Whirligig Beetle
Gyrinus species

April Many, very active in Exton pond

Green Tiger Beetle <i>Cicindela campestris</i>	April	>25 specimens observed at Ketton Quarry (see right)	
Kidney-spot Ladybird <i>Chilocorus renipustulatus</i>	April	3 noted on tree trunk at Leighfield	
Eyed Ladybird <i>Anatis ocellata</i>	April	One noted at Burley Wood	
7-spot Ladybird <i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	March	One seen on comfrey in Barrowden garden	
	April	Two noted on violet leaves on Verge 8, 30 recorded on box hedge at Oakham and two seen in Uppingham	
10-spot Ladybird <i>Adalia 10-punctata</i>	April	One noted at Burley Wood	
Harlequin Ladybird <i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	April	One noted on Verge 8	
Common Bee-fly <i>Bombylius major</i>	April	Several seen at Pickworth Great Wood. One noted in garden at Oakham	

Hymenoptera ANTS, BEES and WASPS

Hornet <i>Vespa crabro</i>	April	One large queen hornet observed at Priors Coppice
Tawny Mining Bee <i>Andrena fulva</i>	April	One female at Bloody Oaks
Parasitic Bee <i>Nomada species</i>	April	One noted at Uppingham
Spring Flower Bee <i>Anthophora plumipes</i>	April	Several males and females seen in Barrowden garden
Honey Bee <i>Apis mellifera</i>	March	One noted in Manton garden, several 'wild' honey bees seen Barrowden
Garden Bumble Bee <i>Bombus hortorum</i>	March	One recorded in Manton garden
Tree Bumble Bee <i>Bombus hypnorum</i>	April	Noted on two occasions at Burley Wood, also twice at Leighfield
White-tailed Bumble Bee <i>Bombus lucorum</i>	March	Two queen bees seen on hellebores at Barrowden
Early Bumble Bee <i>Bombus pratorum</i>	March	One seen in Manton garden
Buff-tailed Bumble Bee <i>Bombus terrestris</i>	March	Queen bees noted Barrowden, Ketton Quarry, Bloody Oaks and Manton
	April	Queen bee noted on Verge 5
Common Carder Bee <i>Bombus pascuorum</i>	March	One recorded at Manton

Many thanks to the following observers: C Baxter, A & L Biddle, T Caldicott, G Chiverton, M Grimes, R Lemmon, D Masters, D Needham, P Scott, D Tang, L Worrall

MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

21 Waverley Gardens, Stamford PE9 1BH. Telephone: 01780 762108
E-mail: rnhs_mammals@talktalk.net

March/April 2018

At Church Street in Langham on 2nd March, **Otter** footprints were observed in snow on top of the frozen surface of the brook upstream and downstream of the bridge, and at RW as usual otters' spraint marked several of the mink rafts, and left footprints on others. **Stoats** were seen in Leighfield in March, and during April at Martinsthorpe, Leighfield and Leighfield Fishponds, at RWNR on the track near

360 hide, and at Greetham Valley Golf Course. A single **Weasel** was seen at RWNR Field 16 on 12th April.

Hedgehogs were very much later emerging this year, as several of you noted in your reports. It is hardly surprising that they stayed in hibernation longer when we had such a cold and miserable early spring! We do seem to be having a 'bumper bundle' of hedgehog reports however (48!). They have reappeared in Linda Worrall's garden in Barrowden at last – after an absence of many months one popped under her carport gate on 1st April. Others were seen elsewhere in the village at around the same time, although droppings were found on 13th March, and one was reported still in hibernation on 15th April. The earliest hedgehog was seen on 15th March crossing the road in Cottesmore. In Langham the first appeared on camera on 25th March, and they have been turning up very regularly since, in twos and threes. In Barrow hedgehogs appear nearly every evening to feast on food left out for them. The latest 'first report' came from Barmstedt Drive in Oakham on April 9th where a single hog turned up, but will no doubt continue to expect food to be provided!

Two **Bank Voles** have been reported, one in Barrowden, on top of a patio wall nibbling something unspecified; and one was seen in the garden of the Willows in Barrow.

A **Badger** was seen on the trail cam at Mundays Close in Langham at 1.30 am on 1st April, and a sett and latrine were discovered nearby. At Orchard Close on 19th April another was seen near the brook. Another live badger was seen near Manton on the grass verge in April early one morning. Latrines were also found at RWNR near Snipe Hide. Other badger sightings all concerned road casualties, a total of nine animals recorded. A **Fox** is a regular star on the trail cam at Langham, appearing 5 times in March, and almost every night in April, sometimes staying for 30 minutes before wandering off. At RWNR a fox was seen in Field 17 near Lagoon 8 in early April. A fox was a road casualty near Seaton Grange in early March.

Brown hares have been seen commonly around the county, a total of 18 reports received, up to 4 or 5 at one time. **Grey squirrels** are regularly seen on the trail cam at Langham, and also at Pickworth.

Evidence of **Moles** was seen at Langham, Merry's Meadows, Pickworth and Ryhall, and **Rabbits** were reported from Greetham Valley Golf Course, and Ryhall.

Water Voles continue to thrive at RWNR, present at many of the sites monitored, and evidence of their presence has again been found at the Oakham canal, after an absence of signs for some months.

Roe Deer are seen regularly at Burley Wood, and have also been reported from Martinsthorpe, Leighfield, and Ketton Quarry. Only three reports of **Fallow deer** have been filed this time, in Burley, and Greetham Valley Golf Course. **Muntjac** are everywhere, 25 reports from Ketton, Burley, Hambleton, Barnsdale, Wardley and elsewhere.

Thank you all for sending your observations, and making the task of compiling the report such an interesting one. Records received from: J & D Ball, A & L Biddle, T Caldicott, C Gallimore, M & G Griffin, M Grimes, V Hemsley, P Langstone, R Lemmon, M Markham, D Masters, T Mitcham, D Needham, P J Rudkin, L Worrall



A Roe deer entranced us at the Dawn Chorus at Burley Wood on May 5, but I haven't yet been able to find anyone who took a good photograph of it. It IS here ... Photo, FF Editor

BATS

RECORDER Jenny Harris

41 Woodland View, Oakham LE15 6EJ. Telephone: 01572 755274
E-mail: jharris@lrwt.org.uk

March/April 2018

Firstly, I would like to give an up-date report on the bats from Northamptonshire on which I reported in March *Fieldfare*. The female **Barbastelle** (25 January) would only eat mealworm insides, with which she was hand-fed. Warmth and food precipitated pregnancy and on 13 March she aborted a tiny foetus, which was very upsetting for us both and for a while her weight went down to 7.3 g. The



Purple Thorn, Photo R Edwards.
More photos of challenging species like this one, please – bats would be good too – FF Editor. See page 2.

weather in March and April remained cold, often windy and wet, so I retained her in captivity, giving her regular flight practise round my lounge. At the beginning of May, the outlook was good for warm days and most importantly warm nights, so I planned to release her. The area around the site near Oundle looked very bat-friendly so she was released on 5 May. The Barbastelle obviously knew where she was and immediately I put her (well warmed up) on my outstretched hand she took off and within moments she had disappeared towards a stream valley. The two **Common Pipistrelles** from behind the burglar alarm were released at Gretton on the evening of 26 March during a mild spell. As with the Barbastelle, they were kept very warm before and during their journey to the release site, then allowed to take off from my gloved hand in their own time.

There were no Rutland records in March, the first being on 15 April (and on subsequent dates) when bats were seen emerging from the west end of The Stone House, Wing, where there were plenty of droppings below the roost entrance. On 19 April, between 4.30 am and 5.30 am, a small bat was flying at rooftop height round chimneys in Redland Close, Barrowden. The weather was still and warm; only one 'pipistrelle-sized' bat was seen at any one time. On 26 April a small bat was seen flying fast and erratically over the hedge near VTC at RW at around 9.30 pm. Earlier that evening we had seen many insects flying round the centre.

The bat boxes in Burley Wood were checked on the afternoon of 18 April. Linda Biddle, myself, Lloyd Park, Joelle Woolley and two other members of RW staff carried out the check (Joelle's baby Ivy also in attendance). The weather was warm (22 °C) and sunny, which meant the bats could be very lively, so it was decided not to weigh or measure them. Any bats found at this time of year would be adults.

Box no.	Box type	Species	Sex	Other contents	Tree	Aspect
BW1	1FF	None		Bat poo	Hide	West
BW2	2F-DFP	Soprano pip	F	7 other bats	Oak	East
BW3	2F-DFP	None		Bat poo 1cm deep	Ash	S. East
BW4	2F-DFP	Soprano pip	M	2 Soprano pips	Oak	South
BW5	2F-DFP	None		Garden spider	Oak	S. West
BW6	2F-DFP	None		Bird nesting material	Oak	East
BW7	2F-DFP	Pipistrelle sp. (escaped)		Bat poo	Ash	East

BW2 is the box in which nine soprano pipistrelles were found in September 2017.

My thanks to Jenny Harris, Charles Gallimore and Linda Worrall for records; and to Linda Biddle, Joelle Woolley and her RW team for checking the bat boxes.

RNHS CONTACTS

Chairman

Linda Biddle
21 Waverley Gardens, Stamford PE9 1BH
01780 762108
abiddle21@talktalk.net

Fieldfare Editor

Hendrina Ellis
Old Hunt's Maltings, Water St, Stamford PE9 2NJ
01780 482048
hendrinawe@gmail.com

Secretary

Position vacant

Wildlife Recorders

Contact details can be found on RNHS website

Treasurer/Membership

Margaret Conner

24 Burrough Rd, Somerby, Melton Mowbray LE14 2PP
01664 454532
mjconner100@gmail.com

Programme Secretary

Position vacant

Website Editor

Peter Scott

12 Tees Close, Oakham, LE15 6SP
01572 720349
peter.scott27@btopenworld.com

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