

Cute but not cuddly. One of many at bird feeders at the Visitors' Centre at Egleton. Photo, Peter Scott.



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Spring is almost here, and the signs are all around us. The catkins have finally dropped, but gave us a haze of yellow which brightened January and February, and the snowdrops have been beautiful. Now the pussy willows are out and birds are singing, making us think that spring may soon burst forth, but still the wet and cold continue! The amount of moisture in the soil should make for very vigorous growth, so let's hope for some sunshine soon, to shine on the new leaves and blossoms, and encourage us to get out and about, looking at our local wildlife. **Don't forget we need you to send observations** to Recorders so that we have an up-to-date picture of the wildlife in our countryside, and can help to protect it when threats are raised.

At the AGM three new committee members were elected, Richard Brown, already known to members as our Butterfly Recorder, his wife Linda, a keen botanist, and John Bristow, Reserves Officer for LRWT working from Leicester, who lives locally. We thank them for being willing to serve and hope they will enjoy meeting with us to help with the running of our Society.

We still lack a Programme Secretary to arrange the programme for 2019, and while we have plenty of ideas for both indoor and outdoor meetings, **there can be no programme next year** without someone to be responsible for this.

A report of the proceedings of the AGM is on page 14, and will also update you on the situation at Clipsham Quarry, Eyebrook (see also next page) and Burley Wood.

Linda Biddle *RNHS Chair*

Eyebrook Reservoir Access Update



Eyebrook Reservoir,
Photo, P Scott

As you will all be aware from previous notifications in *Fieldfare*, on the website and in emails, RNHS, along with other groups such as LROS and the Eyebrook Wildlife Group, had its open access permit withdrawn following changes to the lease issued to the new management of the reservoir. The access points to the reservoir were re-enforced and patrols actively asked people to leave the reservoir grounds.

Over the last few months there has been ongoing contact to see if any changes to this position were possible but without any apparent success. Not having heard anything for a little while I wrote directly to the management company to enquire about the possibilities. To some extent the position has not changed but they have negotiated a position where they can, on a restricted basis, accept applications from organised groups, but individual visits are still precluded.

Below is a copy of part of the response I received:

'As you are probably aware, the owners of the Eyebrook estate, Tata Steel UK, have leased the management of the site to Fishery Management (UK) Ltd. In the lease Tata stipulated that the estate is private with no public access. Therefore, to comply to our lease we are unable to grant access to members of the public. Furthermore, with much of the site designated a SSSI (Special Site of Scientific Interest) we have legal obligations to ensure we manage those areas in line with the requirements set out within the SSSI management plan, unfortunately that again does not allow public access.

However, after discussions with Tata Steel we are now in a position where we are able to accept applications from organised groups and associations to visit the Eyebrook.

We cannot guarantee every application will be granted or full access to the estate will always be available, as it is dependent on the time of year, work being carried out on the estate and availability of our staff.

Uncontrolled public access will not be able to happen at Eyebrook.

I would like to thank your Society members for being respectful towards the situation and we look forward to working with yourself and Society members in the future.'

I am proposing to meet with the management company as I still feel it is worthwhile maintaining a relationship with them going forward. RNHS would however like to ask members to continue to respect the access restrictions as this will no doubt benefit us in the future.

Peter Scott, RNHS Vice-chairman

DIARY DATES

29 April, 10.30 am



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.

Barnack Hills and Holes – Pasque flowers

John Rodgers, RNHS Botany Recorder, leads a walk through this important NNR. (Map ref: TF073047; postcode PE9 3EQ.) The unique hummocky landscape of the Hills and Holes was created by quarrying for limestone. The stone was a valuable building stone first exploited by the Romans over 1500 years ago. Quarrying continued into medieval times. Our visit is timed to see thousands of rare Pasque flowers and other plants of the species-rich limestone grassland that colonised the thin soil when quarrying ceased.

Park at the small car park on the left off the Wittering road, a few hundred yards after the turn towards the A1 at cross roads. Good footwear needed - some steep banks, may be slippery if wet.

Queries: John Rodgers, 01572 757278

5 May, 3.45 am

Dawn Chorus at Burley Wood

Led by Anthony and Linda Biddle, following a long RNHS dawn chorus tradition – an occasion to be remembered and well worth getting up for (so says your editor!) (Map ref: SK892093.) Park with care on verge by gate. Warm clothing and suitable footwear essential. We recommend bringing a torch, a hot drink and a picnic chair. *Queries:* Anthony and Linda, 01780 762108 / 0774 9636919

20 May, 10.30 am

Cribbs Meadow – early Spring flowers

Jenny Harris, former reserve manager, leads this walk in a historic SSSI which is also a National Nature Reserve owned by LRWT. *'The diverse flora includes Adder's Tongue Fern, Pepper Saxifrage, Hayrattle and Green-winged Orchid.'* Park on roadside verge at map ref: SK900188 (this is the gateway into North Meadow, opposite the turn to South Witham.) *Queries:* Jenny Harris, 01572 755274 / 07897 123566

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

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

RNHS EVENING MEETINGS

Indoor meetings are held at Voluntary Action Rutland (VAR), Lands End Way, Oakham LE15 6RB. Tea and coffee, free. Visitors are asked for a donation of £2.

Tuesday 27 March, 7.30 pm

Bees and Wasps

Many RNHS members will already know Steve Woodward and Helen Iken. Helen is the President of Loughborough Nats, and Steve does a lot of the work for their bulletin, and edits the *Rutland and Leics Recorder*. They are acknowledged experts on many insects, particularly bees and wasps. They spent some time in Rutland last year, surveying interesting wildlife sites.

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST, RUTLAND GROUP

For events in Leicestershire and Rutland see www.lrwat.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

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January 2018

Atmospheric pressure and wind Overall a low-pressure month, there was a brief high-pressure period of 4 days, the 29th–30th inclusive, but otherwise it was very unsettled. Winds in the first half were very variable in direction and in the second were mostly SW–W. There were two named storms: Eleanor on the 3rd gave gusts up to 27 mph at 09.00; and Georgina on the 24th up to 38 mph at the same time of day. On many other days there were gusty conditions, which brought wind chill into the equation.

Temperature Leaving aside the wind chill, this was not a cold January, the mean temperature, 5.31 °C, was second warmest in the decade after 2012 (5.33 °C). There were four air frosts, the lowest 1.5 °C on 4th–5th, and the 27th–28th was by far the warmest day with an overnight minimum of 9.1 °C and a daytime maximum of 15.1 °C.

Rain A total of 44.9 mm was recorded here (1.75 inches) which is 90% of my long-term mean of 28 years.

Blue Moon This month has had two full Moons in the calendar month of January, an event that occurs every 2–3 years. It does not mean that the Moon appears blue, although this can happen at any time under certain atmospheric conditions, but simply that there have been two full Moons. It also happens, coincidentally, that due to its orbit round the Sun being elliptical, the Moon is at its nearest to the Earth at the moment and it therefore appears larger and brighter than usual.

February 2018

Atmospheric pressure and wind There were two periods, 1st–9th and 20th–end of month, when winds were NW–NE, with the middle eleven days SW–W, and in the first of these it was often blustery. The second ‘northerly’ period coincided with a large anticyclone which persisted over Scandinavia and brought some very cold weather in which the wind chill factor was significant. The lowest pressure I recorded was 1000 mb on the 13th and the highest 1032 mb on the 26th.

Temperature A cold February, the mean night-time minimum –1.20 °C, and the overall mean 2.55 °C, were both 9th in the decade 2009–2018, just above 2012. There were 17 nights when the minimum was below freezing and the coldest nights were the 27th–28th at –8.5 °C, and the next which was slightly higher at –7.5 °C. (There were 2 consecutive nights in 2012 when I recorded –14 °C and –12 °C.)

Rain The total I recorded was 39.7 mm (1.6 inches) which is 109% of my long-term mean. The last 3 days of the month produced snow, which when converted to water was 15.7 mm or 40% of the month’s total. Despite the ‘February fill-dike’ reputation the month is currently the third driest, on average, in the year!

Gilbert White, the Rutland connection

Recently in *Fieldfare* I quoted from one of Gilbert White’s letters of 1770 which gave the mean annual rainfall for Rutland, and this prompted me to investigate his connection with the county, living as he did in Selborne, Hants. It probably began with Gilbert’s aunt Mary White when in 1719 she married the Rev. Baptist Isaac who was Rector of Whitwell and Ashwell. When Gilbert was a young man he is known to have visited friends and relations in Rutland a number of times.

Among the people he will have met when in Rutland was Thomas Barker of Lyndon Hall who recorded natural history, weather and astronomical events throughout practically the whole of his life, and it is Barker’s record that Gilbert is quoting in his 1770 letter.

A further strengthening of the Rutland connection will have occurred when Gilbert’s sister Anne married the aforesaid Thomas Barker in 1751 and she became the lady of Lyndon Hall when her father-in-law died some 8 years later.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

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January/February 2018



Photo, D Cotter

Not many amphibians were brave enough to be about in these two months but frog spawn appeared in Barrowden on 17th February and more spawn and frogs were about on 18th. This is the earliest spawn in the county since 1990.

In Wing a solitary male **Great Crested Newt** was present in my cellar on 5th January and two **Smooth Newts** were in my pond on 10th January, but there were no other sightings.

My thanks to Linda Worrall for her record.

BIRDS

RECORDER Terry Mitcham

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January/February 2018



Photo, D Needham

Rutland Water retained its rarer visitors from 2017 with the American Wigeon, Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes and Great Northern Divers all present to the end of February. Both reservoirs attracted Smew, with several superb males on show throughout this period. Flythrough Glossy Ibis and Snow Bunting were the only new, if brief, rarities. Drumming Great Spotted Woodpeckers were reported more widely following my appeal – many thanks for these records, keep them coming. Garden records were topped by Tree Sparrows at Exton with Blackcap, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll and Reed Bunting also visiting favoured feeding stations.

My thanks to the following for their records: D & J Ball, A & L Biddle, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, P and M Coughlan, R Edwards, M and G Griffin, J Harris, T Land, P Langston, LROS, T Mitcham, B Moore, J S & J Rodgers, RWNR

Bewick's Swan	Two adults were reported at EBR on 09.01.
Whooper Swan	At EBR there were five on 08.01, with three next day. 28 flew over RW on 22.02, with five in north arm.
Pink-footed Goose	Flocks of 200 and 70 flew over RWEg on 05.01, with flocks of 150 and 30 over Pilt on 06.01.
White-fronted Goose	Four were at RWEg on 17.02, with the same at FHP from 24 to at least 26.02.
Barnacle Goose	44 presumed feral birds were at RW from 31.01, to at least 18.02.
Brent Goose	An adult dark-bellied bird was on Hamb peninsula between 13–21.01.
Egyptian Goose	Four were at LFP on 01.01, with three all month. 12 were at FHP on 02.02, with seven at Rygate lake in Ext Park on 10.02.
Shelduck	Two were at LFP on 28.01 and three flew over Martinsthorpe on 20.02. At FHP three were present from 19.01, with four on 17.02.
Mandarin Duck	A male was at Geest on 08.01, with one or two near Wg on 05.02.
American Wigeon	The male at RWEg was present throughout both months but went missing between 14 and 22.02.
Wigeon	Away from regular sites, there were 49 on a flooded field at Cott on 18.02, and 450 at LFP on 24.02.
Gadwall	16 were at LFP on 24.02. The peak count at FHP was 57 on 05.01.
Mallard	There were 30 at Greet GC and 42 on the Cott flooded field on 18.02.
Red-crested Pochard	Three were at RW on 01.01.
Pochard	This species is now much scarcer than in past years (see wildfowl counts). Three were at PC ponds on 28.01, and one or two were at FHP between 27.01 and 24.02.
Scaup	Present at RWSA throughout both months with a max of six on 13.01. A male was at EBR on 01.01.

Common Scoter	A male was at RWSA on 04.02.
Smew	Present at both reservoirs throughout both months with peak counts of 16 at RW on 09.01 and five at EBR on 06.01, with three males.
Red-breasted Merganser	A male was at RW Dam between 12–15.01.
Goosander	One was at LFP on 19.01 with two on 28.01. Singles were noted there on 18 and 24.02. 10 were at RWEg6 on 10.02. On Rygate lake in Ext Park there were two on 28.01, five on 10.02 and two on 17.02.
Great Northern Diver	Present at RW Dam/NA/SA throughout both months with four noted on 01.01 and three on 07.01 and 12.02.
Bittern	One was at RWEg3 on 01.1 and 19.01.
Little Egret	Away from RW, singles were on the R. Gwash at Ryhall on 23.01 and 02.02, and at FHP on 27.01 and 02.02.
Great White Egret	Singles were at EBR on 06–07.01 and RW on 01 and 07.02.
Glossy Ibis	On 13.01 one flew over RWEg and was later seen along the R. Chater near Pilt.
Little Grebe	The max at FHP was 17 on 14.01.
Red-necked Grebe	One remained in RWSA throughout both months.
Black-necked Grebe	One was present in NA at RW throughout both months.
Marsh Harrier	One was at RWEg between 04 and 06.02.
Sparrowhawk	Garden records came from Stam, Barrow and Norm, where one took a Robin on 18.02.
Oystercatcher	First noted at RWEg on 26.01, nos increased to 27 on 18.02.
Golden Plover	Nos were generally low with 20 over Whit on 07.01, 40 at Rid on 19.01, and 11 over Leigh on 06.02. On 21.01 there were 130 at RW and three at EBR. c.140 were near LCast on 07.02.
Ringed Plover	Singles were at RWEg on 25/26.01 and 18.02.
Lapwing	c.290 flew south at Pilt on 08.01 with c.200 near Leigh on 17.01. 600 flew west over Leigh on 19.01. On 21.01 there were 668 at RW and 343 at EBR. 258 were at RW on 18.02.
Whimbrel	One was on the 21.01 count at RW.
Curlew	Six were at RW on 21.01 and 12 on 18.02. One or two were over Martinsthorpe on 18, 20 and 21.02, and one was back at a breeding site near Barrow on 22.02.
Ruff	One was at EBR on 15.01.
Dunlin	There were low nos at RW with seven on 21.01, and two on 18.02. EBR had 25 on 15.01 and c.40 on 24.01, but only two on 06.02.
Common Sandpiper	An unseasonal bird remained on Hamb peninsula to 16.01, and one was at EBR on 01.01.
Green Sandpiper	Two were at RW on 21.01.
Redshank	Nine were at RW on 21.01 and 18.02. Two were at EBR on 21.01.
Woodcock	Noted throughout both months with one or two flushed at Leigh, Pilt and Rid, and three in TunnW and WestW, where five were flushed on 20.10. One fed in the open on a lawn at Norm on 28.02, giving excellent views of a special bird.
Snipe	Singles were found at Banthorpe GP, FHP, Cott and Wg up to 18.02. Three were at RW on 21.01 and five on 18.02 and 26.02, the latter birds at Man.
Little Gull	One was in RWSA on 23.02.
Mediterranean Gull	An adult flew over the carpark at RWEg on 22.02.
Iceland Gull	A second winter was at EBR on 09.02 and an adult on 24.02.
Glaucous Gull	A juv roosted at EBR between 06 and 11.01, with an adult on the first date. A juv roosted at RWEg on 12.02, and an adult was at EBR on 25.02.
Stock Dove	c.40 were around Leigh on 21.02.
Woodpigeon	Flocks of c.600 were noted around Barrow during Jan. c.900 flew from a Pilt roost on 14.01.

Barn Owl	Noted in both months in the west of Rutland around LFP/Leigh, Pilt, Pres, Brooke and Man areas and also at RW, the Seek and Shacklewell Hollow.
Little Owl	One was in the regular oak at EBR on 11.02, and it was heard regularly at Barrow in Feb.
Tawny Owl	Calling birds were at Leigh (three on 07 and 26.01, and five on 17.02), Greet GC and Barrow.
Kingfisher	The only record was a single at EBR on 11.02.
Green Woodpecker	Noted at QF, FHP, Greet GC, Barrow, Norm, RWLynd and Upp, where two visited a garden on several occasions in Feb.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Five were along RW south shore on 05.01. Drumming birds were at Berrybutts Spinney, TunnW (two), QF, Lang, Brk HillW, Burl Bushes and WestlandW.
Kestrel	Continues to be well reported with singles at thirteen sites, two at Wg and three around Leigh on 16.02.
Merlin	One was at EBR on 24.01.
Peregrine	One flew south at StrettW on 08.02.
Magpie	Seven were at QF on 07.02. Records of flocks would be very welcome.
Jackdaw	One of the Scandinavian 'Nordic' race was near HM on 21.01.
Raven	Pairs were at two regular nest sites from 19.01, with two south at FHP on 09.02 and one over BarnsW on 25.01.
Goldcrest	Nine were on filter beds at Geest sewage treatment works on 08.01. One was in an Ext garden on 06.02 and three at a Norm garden on 23.02.
Marsh Tit	Noted regularly at TunnW feeders. One was at FHP on 02.02, and two were at EBR feeders on 11.02.
Willow Tit	One or two were at LFP and Leigh, and two were by the R. Chater at Rid on 19.02.
Long-tailed Tit	Garden records came from Barrow (up to ten to 05.02), Oak and Upp (seven in early Feb).
Chiffchaff	Two were at Geest sewage treatment works on 01.02 and one was heard at RWGgorse on 10.02.
Blackcap	A pair were in an Oak garden on 02.01, and one was in another Oak garden between 20 and 28.02.
Nuthatch	Regular in Ext Park woodlands and FHP.
Treecreeper	Reported only from TunnW and Hinman's Spinney.
Fieldfare	Records of overflying flocks were c.270 west at Pilt on 14.01, c.235 south-east over Leigh on 28.01, 250 at Cold Overton on 05.02, and c.230 south-east over RWLynd on 22.02. One took apples on an Ext lawn on 06.02, and six visited Oak gardens on 28.02.
Song Thrush	One feeding from the spilltray of a feeder in an Oak garden on 28.02 was unusual.
Redwing	c.50 were near Taylor's Farm (Pick) on 29.01 and three visited an Oak garden in snowy weather on 28.02.
Stonechat	One was at EBR to 06.01. At RWEg a pair frequented the area by the Centre during Jan and one was by lagoon 4 on 21.01. A male was at the Lynd wader scrape on 27.02. A female was at FHP on several dates between 01 and 17.02.
Tree Sparrow	Up to three fed at a seed feeder in an Ext garden between 02.01 and 03.02. A single in North Brook valley near HM was the only other record.
Grey Wagtail	Singles were on the filter beds at Geest sewage treatment works on 08.01 and 01.02.
Pied Wagtail	11 were on a waterlogged wheat field near Pick on 24.01.
Meadow Pipit	Flocks noted were 30 at LFP on 19.01, 20 near Berrybutts Spinney, RW, on 29.01, 50 at Leigh on 18.02, and 30 on Lynd Top on 23.02.
Rock Pipit	One was in Dickenson's Bay at RW on 21.01.
Chaffinch	The Leigh roost attracted up to 73 birds in Jan. A roost near Wg supported up to 180 in Feb, and up to 120 (18.02) frequented game crops at Leigh in Feb.

Brambling	11 were at the Leigh roost on 01.01 and 20 on 26.01. One or two were in the Pilt and Rid areas in Jan with two near Wg on 02.02. Up to eight were with Chaffinches at Leigh throughout Feb. One was at Banthorpe GP on 06.01.
Greenfinch	More (no number given) were noted at feeders in an Oak garden this winter than in recent years, with birds visiting earlier – before Christmas this winter rather than the end of the year. Song was heard at QF on 07.02.
Hawfinch	Singles were in Ext Park and at Clips on 01.01. One or two were at LFP/Leigh on seven dates from 01.01 to 12.02.
Siskin	Ten were in alders along Oak Canal on 17.01. From 21.01 to the end of Feb, birds were in two Oak gardens with max counts of three on 21.01, and six on 26.02. 17 flew along the R. Chater near Wg on 02.02, and c.40 were on alders near Berrybutts Spinney, RW, on 23.02.
Lesser Redpoll	Garden records came from Ext, where up to four took nyger seed between 04.01 and 05.02, and from two Oak gardens with max counts of three at both sites between 10.01 and 28.02. Two were at PGW on 04.02.
Bullfinch	A pair were described as ‘up to no good’ in an apple tree in an Upp garden on 16.01. How uncharitable !
Snow Bunting	One flew, calling, over RWWhit on 26.01.
Yellowhammer	It is a sign of the times when flocks of 20 near Pilt on 14.01, and 10 near Taylor’s Farm, Pick, are noteworthy.
Reed Bunting	A male fed in an Oak garden throughout both months and four were in a Stam garden on 24.01, with one on 02.02.

Wildfowl Counts for January and February

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir		Fort Henry Ponds /Exton Park		Holywell Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit	
	21.1	18.2	21.1	18.2	19.1	17.2	19.1	16.2	13.1	18.2
Mute Swan	157	110	97	64	9	17	2			2
Greylag Goose	542	76	167	104	36	506	30			22
Canada Goose	612	386	210	1		2			29	3
Barnacle Goose	2	47								
Brent Goose	1									
Egyptian Goose	39	33			1					
Shelduck	7	19			3	4				
Wigeon	3543	2711	746	560	104	273			74	30
American Wigeon	1									
Gadwall	519	322	55	28	42	32			14	22
Teal	924	182	517	325	12	37	42	34	2	12
Mallard	682	505	336	96	122	142	2		141	107
Pintail	8	7	15	1						
Shoveler	35	40	1	2	10	2				
Red-crested Pochard	2									
Pochard	78	47	2	3		2				
Tufted Duck	3026	1500	109	223	39	78	1		36	20
Scaup	1	3								
Goldeneye	405	373	34	49						
Smew	10	10	2	3						

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir		Fort Henry Ponds /Exton Park		Holywell Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit	
	21.1	18.2	21.1	18.2	19.1	17.2	19.1	16.2	13.1	18.2
Goosander	17	15				2				
Great Northern Diver	1	2								
Cormorant	132	178	34	26	5		1			
Little Egret	11	5		1					2	2
Great White Egret	1		1							
Grey Heron	9	11	3	1	2	1	1	1		
Little Grebe	116	88			16	4			15	18
Great Crested Grebe	251	185	31	65						
Red-necked Grebe	1	1								
Black-necked Grebe	1	1								
Water Rail	1	8								
Moorhen	118	128	4	2	13	13		2	12	13
Coot	2705	1385	209	9	90	71			2	2

BOTANY

RECORDER John Rodgers

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January/February 2018

The weather hasn't been very kind to botanists so there have only been two sets of records this time. Everything has probably been delayed by the cold and wet but a **Primrose** was found in bud by Dave Needham at Ketton, and female flowers of **Hazel** have been seen in one or two places. In and around Oakham there are the usual common plants, **Groundsel**, **Chickweed**, **Ground Ivy** and **Red Deadnettle**, whilst **Winter Heliotrope** has flowered in its usual spot by the Oakham Canal.

At February's meeting Susannah O'Riordan gave a talk on 'Back from the Brink' – the project to protect, help prosper or reintroduce a number of species in the area of the old Rockingham Forest which includes Fineshade. This will involve survey work and anybody willing to take part in this will be very welcome. The target plants are **Basil Thyme**, **Fly** and **Man Orchid**, **Yellow Bird's Nest** and **Crested Cow-wheat**. There will be training sessions for those who wish to take part. Full details are on the Friends of Fineshade web-site <https://www.fineshade.org.uk/>; section 'Back from the Brink'.

With luck the worst of the winter weather will be behind us so that we can be out and about. Please send in records of flowering plants seen; we need to know what is about now, so that we can judge how well we are protecting the environment in the future.

BUTTERFLIES

RECORDER Richard Brown

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

MOTHS

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

PLANT GALLS

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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Nothing to report. Looking forward to your records in 2018!

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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January/February 2018

As expected in this period, there were no sightings of the Rutland Orthopterans. This gives me the space to up-date our members regarding the orthoptera distribution maps. The draft of the RNHS *2017 Annual Report* has been completed. Paul Willoughby-Ellis, our *Annual Report* editor, and I had a meeting after Christmas to discuss finalising the maps, the history of which is as follows. The provisional distribution maps were first produced in 2012 (by Elaine Connor), the Ecology Enquiry Officer at Leicestershire County Council. Four years later, Richard Brown and Paul Willoughby-Ellis up-dated those maps to 2016. Finally, Paul filled in the new sites, and up-graded them for the 2017 season.

As a result, the Rutland Orthoptera Final Distribution Maps to be published in our *2017 Annual Report* are the defining ones; they represent the work the Society has carried out from 2001 to 2017. I have already sent the maps on to the National Orthoptera Recording Scheme Organisers, at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Wallingford, Oxfordshire. The scheme (this year of 2018) will be producing the much anticipated National Orthoptera Distribution maps book, to coincide with their 50th Anniversary of setting up the National Orthoptera Recording Scheme. Our final maps will be included!

I am very proud of what we have achieved over those years – the first maps to be published for a species in the Society's history. It has been a great and enjoyable effort for our hard-working field naturalists, and the editors of *Fieldfare* and the *Annual Reports*. Following normal procedures of various national organisations (such as the BTO), there will be no need for distribution maps for 8 to 10 years, for our orthopteran species. This system then highlights the changes over the years, and will give an indication of the success or otherwise. This will of course be up to whoever takes over from me in the future, and I do feel that I (and my fellow workers) will have left a legacy for the Rutland Natural History Society.

OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES

RECORDER Gill Chiverton

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The insect records for the last four months of 2017 come with apologies for their late inclusion in *Fieldfare*. No records were received for January/February 2018. I would like to thank all those people who so regularly send in their insect recordings.

September/October 2017

Odonota DAMSELFLIES

Ruddy Darter
Sympetrum Sanguineum

September One noted on two occasions in Barrowden garden

Dragonflies

Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea* October One seen at beginning of month in Barrowden

Hemiptera BUGS

Sloe Bug October One noted in Barrowden garden
Dolycoris baccarum

Green Shield Bug October One noted in Langham, and 3 seen in Wing
Palomena prasina

Coleoptera BEETLES

Devil's Coach Horse October One rescued from pond in Wing
Ocypus olens

7-spot Ladybird September One observed Stretton Wood. 2 seen Bloody Oaks Quarry
Coccinella 7-punctata

Harlequin Ladybird September One observed at Horn Mill
Harmonia axyridid October Between 500–1000 noted together in large aggregations in shed at Wing

Greater thorn-tipped Longhorn October One recorded at Langham
Pogonocherus Hispidus

Diptera FLIES

Allium Leaf Miner October <100s grubs and pupae noted in leeks at Langham
Phytomyza gymnostoma

Hymenoptera BEES, WASPS AND ANTS

Ruby-tailed wasp September One recorded at Rutland Water
Chrysididae sp.

Hornet *Vespa crabro* September Two noted on ivy flowers at Rutland Water.
One in compost bin in Wing
Small nos. over month in Barrow garden

Common Carder Bee September Two workers at Horn Mill
Bombus pascuorum

OTHER ARTHROPODS

Gastropods SLUGS

Large Black Slug *Arion ater ater* September 5–10 noted, all juveniles, at Rutland Water

Gastropoda SNAILS

Cepaea nemoralis October One seen Ketton Quarry Woodland

Candidula gigaxii October One noted at Ketton Quarry Woodland

November/December 2017

Odonota DRAGONFLIES

Common darter November One noted Leighfields
Sympetrum striolatum Fishponds on post in the sun

Hemiptera BUGS

Box leatherbug December One noted on ivy brought inside
Gonocerus acuteangulatus for Christmas decoration at Wing



Box Leatherbug. Photo C Gallimore

Hymenoptera BEES, WASPS AND ANTS

Honey Bee <i>Apis mellifera</i>	November	One on two occasions in a Manton garden
Garden Bumble Bee <i>Bombus</i>	November	One noted on mahonia flowers at Manton
Buff-tailed Bumble Bee <i>Bombus terrestris</i>	November	One noted at Manton and queen noted on Barrowden

Thanks to: D Ball, T Caldicott, C Gallimore, M Grimes, R Lemmon, M Markham, J Robertson and L Worrall

MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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January/February 2018

For the first time in many years we have no reported **Hedgehog** activity during January and February. There are reports of several known hibernation sites in Barrowden, but wisely the hogs are staying put in the very wintry weather.

Two smallish **Badgers** were seen, chasing each other across the road near Edith Weston, and evidence of activity has been obvious at many known badger setts – the cubs will have been born by now. Badger latrines have also been seen near Pickworth and Clipsham.

The very cold winter has had an effect on **Stoats** – two separate reports were received at the end of January of a stoat in ermine near the Lyndon centre, RWNR. Another stoat was seen near the 360 Hide at RW, this time not in ermine.

Sadly an **Otter** was found as a road casualty yet again on the Hambleton peninsula road, the fourth road death in that area in recent years. Otters have been busy in and around RWNR, one having been seen swimming in front of Lapwing Hide on two occasions in February, and others leaving spraint on almost every mink raft on the reserve.

There have been a few sights of **Foxes** this time, the cold weather making it more difficult for them to find prey, so that they have to hunt more widely sometimes in daylight. One was seen at Ketton Quarry, another ran along a hedge beside the north bank of the Guash at Empingham, and other reports came from Ketton village, Ayston, and near the Lyndon Centre RWNR. Evidence, footprints and scent marking were also recorded from Clipsham and Greetham Valley Golf Club.

Molehills stand out against the green grass in many areas at this time of year, a count of 150 was made in pasture fields near Tickencote, and they were also reported from Shacklewell, Crossroads Farm, Exton, and Clipsham.

Brown hares are also very visible at this time of year, as they move out of cover to prepare for the boxing and breeding season. They have been seen near Pickworth, Exton and Greetham, up to four at one time. A **Rabbit** warren was also seen near Tickencote, and rabbits recorded at Greetham Valley Golf Club.

Two single **Short-tailed Vole** were found beneath reptile shelters at Exton Park at the end of January. The RNHS visit to Egleton saw **Brown Rats** feeding beneath the bird feeders (see front page!), and **Grey Squirrels** have been seen at Pickworth, and at Greetham Valley Golf Club, and dreys are now clearly visible in Pickworth and Clipsham woods, and at Tickencote.

In the January survey of **Water Vole** rafts at RW, droppings were found on rafts at Shoveler Hide, Field 16 ponds, Dog Kennel Field, near Badger Hide, Burley Fishponds, Snipe Hide channel and in the reedbeds, so they are still active around the reserve. At the Oakham canal no signs were found this time, so we hope they will reappear later in the year.



Otter. Photo, M Lewin



Water vole. Photo, L Biddle

Fallow deer were reported from similar areas – Pickworth, Clipsham, Exton and near Banthorpe gravel pits, where the largest group of 12 was seen, and also the only **Roe deer** reported this time. **Muntjac** are everywhere – Ketton, Preston, Normanton, Pickworth, commonly seen at RWNR and Greetham.

Many thanks to the trusty band of recorders: D & J Ball, A J Biddle, J Davis, C Gallimore, G & M Griffin, P Langstone, T Mitcham, D Needham, L Park, P J Rudkin

BATS

RECORDER Jenny Harris

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January/February 2018

There have been no records of bats for Rutland during this period. Normally I report on the hibernation surveys carried out by Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group in January and February at the disused railway tunnel at Morcott for the National Bat Monitoring Programme. This tunnel runs under the A47 and is open at both ends; a small number of bats are recorded hibernating in deep crevices each year. This January, however, we arrived to find that security fences had been put up in the mouth of the tunnel at each end, barring access. We have learnt that this was done by Historic Railways, part of the Highways Authority, and so far no further access for surveying the bats has been granted. Indeed, they have asked for details of any other tunnels that LRBG have surveyed; talks are ongoing.

Although there have been no Rutland bat reports, I have been involved in bat activity just over the border in Northamptonshire. On 25.1, just before the really bad weather set in, a local pest control company brought me a bat, carefully contained in a woollen bobble hat. This turned out to be a beautiful female barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* found at a site near Oundle. The group of barns where she had been found were having their roofs removed in preparation for conversion to offices and she was found on the floor of one of them. The barbastelle is a very rare species nationally and I have never looked after one before so I was unsure whether its weight, at 8.8 g, was suitable for release at this time of year. That, together with the likelihood of her not having a roost to go back to, or being disturbed again during the building work, means that I have kept her until better weather comes.

A month later, on 26.2, two common pipistrelles *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* were brought to me by a vet in Corby. These two, a plump female weighing 5.7 g and a weedy male, 4.2 g, had fallen out of a burglar alarm in Gretton as it was dismantled for replacement. There are probably plenty of places for them to go back to in Gretton (including a maternity roost at the church) so they will be released when there are a few warmer nights. The female is being kept fairly cool, and on a diet, so that warmth and abundant food do not trigger pregnancy too early. The little male needed feeding up, as 4.2 g was too thin for him to survive the remaining period of hibernation. He is allowed to eat as much as he likes and is now a bonny 6.2 g!

Rutland Natural History Society: Minutes of 53rd AGM, March 6, 2018

The meeting was held at Voluntary Action Rutland, Lands End Way, Oakham with Mr Philip Rudkin in the chair.

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Joss Hanbury, Frances Foster, David Cotter, Derick Hill, Alan Comber, Julie Comber, Linda Brown, Richard Brown.

Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 8 March 2017 had been circulated in *Fieldfare*. They were approved and signed.

Matters arising:

The *Annual Report 2016* (produced in 2017), included maps and colour which had added greatly to publishing costs. It is therefore only available on the Society's website, as is also a summary of the whole report called *Overview of the Annual Report 2016*.

50th Anniversary commemoration

Seven bat boxes had been put up in Burley Wood in March 2017; six of the boxes had been used by bats during the summer. A moth trap and lamp were purchased and had been used to increase our knowledge of moth species present in 2017.

Honorary Treasurer's Report

Margaret Conner commented on the Society's accounts for the year ending 31 December 2017. Total income for the year had been £4,581; expenditure had been £3,208, resulting in an overall surplus for the year of £1,373. Additional income had been received through a legacy of £500 from the late Nola Thurlow, and from sales of the Society's calendar. Costs relating to Rutland show and publishing and distributing the *Annual Report* had been lower; a change of insurance provider had resulted in a saving of £100. There had been higher costs relating to paying external speakers and leaders. Margaret felt some concern over the ongoing loss of members but this was mostly due to the age profile of membership, and in general it had been a good year for the Society. Margaret expressed thanks to Martin Grimes for reviewing the accounts. (Her full report is on the website.)

Adoption of the Report was proposed by Roy Lemmon, seconded by David Needham and carried unanimously.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Following the death of Mr George Kirk, it was proposed that Mr Douglas Matthew be appointed the new Independent Examiner for the 2018 accounts. *Proposed by Margaret Conner, seconded by Anthony Biddle.*

Chairman's Annual Report

Society Chairman Linda Biddle gave her report for 2017.

Events

There had been a varied programme of outdoor and indoor events, a highlight of which had been an evening of members' photographs to launch the Society's first calendar of Rutland and its wildlife. Reports of outdoor meetings had appeared in *Fieldfare*. A joint meeting with the British Plant Gall Society at Clipsham had been very successful, as had a weekend in Norfolk in October. Linda thanked all leaders and speakers.

In June, the Society manned a stand at the Rutland Show to promote the Society. Posters advertising our events had been reintroduced.

Website

Linda thanked Peter Scott for keeping the Society's website regularly updated and maintained, as an interface with members and the general public.

Fieldfare and Annual Report

Thanks were expressed to Hendrina Ellis for continuing to produce and edit the Society's impressive newsletter, *Fieldfare*, containing members' records and photographs. Linda also thanked Paul Ellis for editing the *Annual Report 2016*, which for the first time contained full colour distribution and location maps, in addition to the detailed information provided by all the Recorders. Production of a paper copy for every member proved too expensive (over £15 per copy) so the *Annual Report 2016* had been published on the Society's website only. Linda thanked all Recorders for their work.

Wild Horizons

Membership of Wild Horizons had slightly increased but it had not been possible to arrange special events for the group.

Recorders' meeting The annual meeting of Recorders had been held, and Recorders reported on the year's activities. Recorders had expressed concern that fewer members were contributing to the Society's records, which were less comprehensive as a result.

Roadside verges The Society had worked with Rutland CC to raise the issue of continued pressure on the important roadside verges. Some members were willing to continue to record and monitor verges but the small number of recorders meant that many verges were not recorded in 2017.

Eyebrook Reservoir Access for RNHS members to land adjoining the reservoir had been withdrawn; efforts to renegotiate access with Tata Steel had been unsuccessful, so far. See Peter Scott's report on page 2.

Committee – appeal for help In 2017, the Committee had been unable to recruit new committee members and the key roles of Secretary and Programme Secretary remained vacant. Work usually done by these officers had mainly been done by the Chairman, which was unsustainable. Without a Programme Secretary there was likely to be no future programme. Linda called on members to aid the Society, even if only for a limited time, to help share responsibility for aspects of the Society that members expect and enjoy. They could do this by joining the Committee and standing for key offices. (See below for those people who afterwards put themselves forward.)

Linda ended by thanking all those who had worked hard in 2017 to support our successful and active Society.

Acceptance of the Chairman's Report was proposed by Gill Chiverton, seconded by Jane Ball and carried unanimously.

Election of Officers and Committee

Election of the following officers was as follows, after due proposing and seconding had taken place:

:

President: Mr Joss Hanbury
Chairman: Mrs Linda Biddle
Secretary: Post vacant
Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Mrs Margaret Conner
Programme Secretary: Post vacant
Fieldfare Editor: Hendrina Ellis
Honorary Vice Chairman: Peter Scott
Committee members: Gill Chiverton, David Cotter, Jenny Harris, Derick Hill

New Committee members

Having been duly proposed and seconded, we welcomed new Committee members John Bristow, Linda Brown and Richard Brown.

Any other business

Clipsham Quarry The Chairman reported that Rutland Water Nature Reserve conservation team had carried out scrub clearance at the quarry and would continue in the Autumn. A management plan agreed by Natural England was now in place. The quarry has recently been sold to Stamford Stone who, according to Sue Thomas the former owner, are willing to look after the conservation interest. Mrs Thomas will put in a new seat as a tribute to George Sellars and her father Sir David Davenport-Handley.

Burley Wood The owner, Joss Hanbury, has confirmed that members of RNHS will continue to have access to the wood outside the shooting season.

Date of next meeting

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 5 March 2019.



Wigeon flyby in the snow this winter.
Photo, D Cotter

What's happening at Rutland Water? (Field trip, 24 February)



Mat Cottam at the RNHS field trip.
Photo, P Rudkin

Dr Mat Cottam, Reserve Manager at Rutland Water, led a party of 20 RNHS members round parts of Rutland Water on Saturday 24 February. There was plenty to see, from curlew to smew to sparrowhawk to pintail (complete list on website); and plenty to hear about – especially new volunteering projects which are changing the direction of conservation at RW. A very enjoyable morning – keep an eye on developments at Rutland Water!



Smew, Rutland Water, photo P Scott



Fieldfare, D Cotter



Goosander on the Welland, photo P Scott

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