

CONTENTS

Noticeboard	1	Plant galls report	12
RNHS events	3	Insects and others	13
Weather summary	4	Glow-worm notes	14
Amphibian and reptile report	5	Bat report	15
Bird report	6	Mammal report	16
Botany notes	10	Mycology notes	17
Butterfly notes	10	Amphibians in the cellar	18
Moth notes	11	A walk in a Rutland wood	20
Orthoptera report	12		

NOTICEBOARD

Check out two fascinating accounts by two of our Recorders at the end of Fieldfare: Dr Charles Gallimore's 'Amphibians in the cellar of Stone House Wing', which gives the story behind the intriguing entries in the Amphibian and Reptile Reports; and Phil Rudkin's 'A walk in a Rutland wood' with exciting news of two species found there.

Digital Recording – please read this first!

As I am sure you are all aware from information provided at the last indoor meeting and in March *Fieldfare*, the Society is progressing with its attempts to develop a user friendly and 'pretty' online recording system. This will be a work in progress for some considerable time but we do hope that you will give it a try if you have access to the internet. Roy Edwards was pleasantly surprised at how many members do have email addresses and as such will be able to access and submit the online forms.

As a Society we are keen to reduce the amount of paperwork and the need for what is becoming a costly postal submission. However, if paper and post is your preferred option, please continue to submit your records as these are still most vital to our annual returns.

A lot of work has been done quietly behind the scenes to try and develop a simple system that will work across all the different sectors. A big thank you must therefore go to Roy Edwards, Margaret Conner and Linda Biddle for their contributions.

We have also held meetings to get the views of the Recorders and some of their comments are still to be actioned.

Should you wish to give digital recording a try, we have decided to start with Amphibians, Bats, Botany, Mammals and Orthoptera – other areas will become live as we progress. Hopefully the instructions on the 'Recording Page' on the website will help you to work your way through what is required.

Each picture will take you to the appropriate recording sheet and there you will find the email to return the form to. Please include as much information as you like in the 'Comments' column for each species you have listed. The form is designed to take as many species as you care to enter. Because these records are on a spreadsheet, the Recorder can sort them, cut and paste, etc. as they wish.

Please give the system a go.

Peter Scott

Fieldfare

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What is VC55?

We have had several questions regarding 'What is VC55?' The following is based on an answer by Sue Timms to this question by Phil Rudkin.

Vice-counties are a rather strange phenomenon, that go back a long time – they were first used in the mid 19th century by Watson, in a published work. His idea was to divide the country up into similar-sized geographical units, largely based on administrative and historic counties, but with some merging, splitting and rationalising to try and make the Vice-counties into similar sizes. He also addressed some boundaries anomalies and awkward shapes like islands or fingers of one county extending into another, which would be difficult to record to.

So right from the start, Rutland and Leicestershire were merged into one Vice-county 55, appearing in the standard lists as 'Leicestershire (with Rutland)'. The boundary is similar (but not the same) as the combined administrative areas of Rutland County Council, Leicester City Council and Leics County Council. Despite various changes in administrative county boundaries and names since the 1850s, naturalists have tended to stick with these historic 'Watsonian' Vice-counties, as they provide continuity of recording (e.g. it allows historic County lists to be compared with modern day ones.) All the national recording groups I have checked out only recognise a single Vice-county 55 covering Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, and it is the geographic unit that we use at LRERC.

Most Vice-counties hope to have a County Recorder for each taxon group. (We should probably refer to these people as Vice-county recorders). But there's no reason why the job can't be shared, and I think what has happened in our Vice-county is that there has been some role-sharing in the past, with individuals taking on responsibility for the Rutland part of our Vice-county. This seems sensible as it's a way of sharing the load and responsibility – but would only work if both parties shared data.

A difficulty may arise if there is a need for a national contact point – e.g. most national recording schemes have close links with Vice-county recorders, some of whom are actually 'appointed' by the national scheme (this is certainly the case with Botany, and I think also with birds and mammals; it may also be the case with other groups.). In these instances there would probably need to be an overall vice-county recorder, who could liaise with both

national recorders and with a local network of recorders, including any with 'sub-Vice-county' responsibility.

Volunteers wanted for LRWT reserves

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust take care of 35 nature reserves in the two counties. Much of the work on the reserves is undertaken by teams of volunteers. One such team has recently been formed to help look after reserves in the Rutland and Melton Mowbray area; known as the Limestone Team. More volunteers would be very welcome.

The group meets alternate Mondays, from 9.30am to 3.0pm. The majority of work involves grassland management at places like Bloody Oaks Quarry, Ketton Quarry, Cribb's and Merry's Meadows and the Holwell Reserves. Tools and safety equipment are provided, together with tea/coffee and biscuits. Training is also provided, although bearing in mind what a great impact our work can have, very little training is needed for the tasks.

Some of the tasks we have carried out recently include fence repairs at Bloody Oaks, cutting and raking up coarse grass and small scrub at Stonesby Quarry and hedge maintenance at Ketton Fields. We also cleared some areas of bare ground for a MSc. project on the colonization of bare ground by invertebrates at Ketton Quarry. It is a relaxed (but effective) group and there is usually plenty of time to enjoy the wildlife. There is no need for regular or long-term commitment, just sign up and come along whenever you feel the need for some healthy outdoor exercise which is, of course, totally free.

If you would like to join us or want more information, please contact Jenny Harris (LRWT Conservation Officer and RNHS Bat Recorder) on 0116 2487358 during office hours or email me on jharris@lrwt.org.uk.



Leicestershire
& Rutland
Wildlife Trust

NB: Open afternoon at Bloody Oaks

Details of the LRWT open afternoon at Bloody Oaks on Sunday 29 June, led by Anthony Biddle of RNHS and LRWT, are given on page 4. It was missed out of *Wildlife News*, the LRWT newsletter.

RUTLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY EVENTS

Full details of all these events can be found on our website at www.rnhs.org.uk.

Wednesday 28 May **BEAUMONT CHASE FARM WALK** **7.00 pm**

An evening walk around the farmland of RNHS members Mary (ex-Programme Secretary) and Joe Nourish – a very beautiful rural landscape farmed with wildlife in mind.

Meet at Beaumont Chase Farm, Stockerston Rd, Uppingham, LE15 9HJ. (Take the B664 out of Uppingham towards Stockerston, the farm is on the righthand side before the road drops down a steep hill.

(Grid ref: SP 846 988)

Queries: please call Joe Nourish on 07976315793

Thursday 19 June **SEATON MEADOWS MEMORIAL WALK** **2.00 pm**

This walk at Seaton Meadows is being held in memory of Graham Worrall, our longstanding RNHS Membership Secretary, Verge Organiser, and so much more - greatly missed by all. It will be led by the Warden Joe Costley and we should see a good variety of wet meadow plants.

Meet just off the B672 at the point where it passes under the Welland Viaduct. (Grid ref: SP 915 979)

Queries: please call Linda Biddle on 01780 762108

Sunday 22 June **CLIPSHAM QUARRY** **10.00 am**

Leaders Barbara and Don Parker, RNHS members, have been involved with this site for over 30 years. We will be looking for Dark Green Fritillaries, Slow Worms, Greater Butterfly Orchids and Wood Vetch, and other items of interest. (This site is not open to the general public.)

Directions: Turn off A1 for Stretton, head for Clipsham village. From the east end of the village take the Holywell Road for approximately 1 mile. Then look for the quarry entrance on the righthand side of the road. Make your way to park near the stable building. (Grid ref: SK 981 155)

Queries: please call Barbara and Don Parker on 01780 752002

Sunday 13 July **BUTTERFLIES AT FERMYN WOOD** **10.00 am**

Leader Alistair Lawrence, RNHS Butterfly Recorder, hopes to show us the Purple Emperor butterfly, which is a feature of these butterfly rich woods.

At Brigstock, turn off the A6116 onto the Harley Way (towards the National Trust's Lyveden New Bield).

Meet at the gate to the Forestry Commission track in Fermyn Wood, almost opposite the flying/gliding club. Park in the gate (not blocking it) or along the road. (Grid ref: SP 965 859)

Queries: please call Alistair Lawrence on 01572 770492

Saturday 2 August **OAKHAM CANAL/DAWN'S Paddock** **11.00 am**

Leader Ian Merrill, who gave an excellent presentation on Dragonflies at our February indoor meeting, will meet us at the Oakham Canal and then go on to Dawn's Paddock. Bring a packed lunch. We will be focusing on dragonflies (hence the timing) but there is much more of interest. Ian is happy to stay until 3.00 pm if there is enough enthusiasm.

Directions: Leave the Oakham bypass on the Ashwell Road. Carry on to the crossroads, then turn left. After a short distance, park on the verges. (Grid ref: SK 865 110)

Queries: please call Dawn on 01664 454578

Saturday 27 September **FUNGUS FORAY, MORKERY WOOD** **2.00 pm**

Dr Vin Fleming will be leading us on a Fungus Foray. He is a professional mycologist and Chairman and Wildlife Records Officer of the Bourne Group of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

Directions: Going north on the A1, turn right towards Castle Bytham, the wood is on the righthand side. Turn right into the entrance to the wood and meet at the car park. (Grid ref: SK 952 192)

Queries: please call Vin Fleming on 01778 570329

LEICESTER AND RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST RUTLAND GROUP

Rutland Group indoor events are held at the Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre, Egleton; admission £1 includes tea/coffee/biscuits.

For event details, and other activities in Leicestershire and Rutland, including guided walks, see www.lrwot.org.uk, or phone 0116 272 0444 in office hours.

Sunday 29th June OPEN AFTERNOON AT BLOODY OAKS RESERVE 2.00 pm

Anthony Biddle, Rutland Group LRWT, will lead a walk round this interesting reserve, known for Chalk Milkwort, Pyramidal Orchids, Carline Thistle, Dingy Skipper and Marbled Whites plus many more chalkland specialists.

Meet at 2.00 pm at the gate. OS map ref: SK 970108 (Sheet 130). The quarry is 0.5 km south of the A1, and is best approached via the minor road which leaves the A606 Oakham-Stamford road and passes straight through Empingham village. Follow this road for about 3 km towards the A1. The reserve is east of the road at the northern edge of a large block of woodland adjoining the road. Cars should be parked on the wide roadside verge opposite the reserve entrance.

LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST BOURNE GROUP

Bourne Group indoor meetings are held in the Methodist Church Hall, Bourne, and start at 7.30 pm. Refreshments are available at all indoor meetings. A donation of £1.50 as an admission fee is requested, children free.

For details of the LWT Bourne Group's events, see www.freewebs.com/bournetrust/programme.htm.

For other LWT Lincstrust events, see www.lincstrust.org.uk, or phone 01507 526 677 in office hours.

WEATHER SUMMARY Roy Lemmon

87 Empingham Road, Stamford PE9 2SU. Telephone: 01780 762051

March 2014

Atmospheric pressure and wind For the first time this year pressures have changed from being markedly cyclonic and have assumed more 'normal' levels. Pressures started low, indeed the month's lowest, 985 mb, occurred on the 3rd; but apart from the 5th they were then elevated and remained that way, apart from the 20th to 23rd when a depression took over briefly. The pressure at 0900 hours on the 8th was 1025.5 mb which was the highest I had recorded since the 17th December 2013 (1024 mb). The month's highest was 1035.5 mb on the 11th. Winds were generally SW-W up to the 22nd, apart from the 10th to 12th when they were NE; and from 23rd to the end they were variable but predominantly NE-E. However wind speeds in this period were low to nil and this meant that it didn't feel as cold as it might have.

Temperature A warm March, both the mean minimum at 3.3 °C and the mean maximum at 13.27 °C were the second warmest in the last decade; 2005 had a higher mean minimum (3.98 °C) and 2012 a higher mean maximum (13.75 °C). You will remember that March

2013 was very cold, and to emphasise this the figures for that year were -0.80 °C and 5.87 °C respectively. This year there were just four air frosts in the month and the lowest temperature for the month was -2.1 °C on 23rd-24th. The highest daytime maximum was 18.8 °C on both the 9th and 31st. The Central England Temperature for the month was 7.6 °C, some one °C above the long-term mean.

Rain A drier month, the total measured here was 27.2 mm (1.07 inches) which is 76% of the LTM of 24 years. The total in the first week was 13.7 mm including the month's highest daily total of 11.6 mm on the 2nd, then there were 12 days without rain, and from then until the end of the month there were 9 days in which rain fell but was often difficult to measure because of the small amounts. Averaged over England and Wales, total rainfall was 49.0 mm (1.93 inches), some 69% of the LTM and in the last 100 years 32 Marches have been drier.

Sunshine Averaged over England and Wales, the total was 156 hours or 134% of the LTM – this was the sunniest month since August 2013.

April 2014

Atmospheric pressure and wind The pressure this month varied almost daily but over only a relatively narrow band of readings, i.e. there were no particularly low pressures and on only two days, the 15th and 16th, did it exceed 1030 mb and then only by 1 millibar. Winds were similarly very variable in direction and over half the month they were from the NW-NE, but never for more than 3 days at a time. This may account for it not being as warm as one might have otherwise expected (see below).

Although not a meteorological phenomenon, it is perhaps worth mentioning the earth tremors which occurred this month. These were on the 17th and 18th and measured 3.2 and 3.5 on the Richter scale respectively; the epicentres were some 3.7 miles north of Oakham and 2.5 miles deep. This is known as a 'double earthquake' and was followed on the 28th by an aftershock of 1.7 Richter. I have heard no reports of serious damage to property.

Temperatures The mean minimum, 5.93 °C, was the third highest in the past decade, not far behind 2011 (6.06 °C) and 2007 (6.25 °C); but this was not echoed by the mean maximum which at 15.92 °C was in the middle, i.e. fifth in the decade, and well behind the leader, 2011 at 19.3 °C. There were just 3 air frosts around the middle of the month, the lowest being -0.6 °C on the night of 14th-15th. The highest daytime maximum was 20.0 °C on the 30th. The Central England Temperature for the month was 3.3 °C above the average.

Rain A dry month with a total recorded of 24.1 mm (0.95 inches) which is 54% of my long-term mean. Daily amounts were small, the highest being 6.4 mm on the 7th, and there were 20 days on which no rain was recorded. The total rainfall for the month averaged over England and Wales was 2.52 inches or 98% of the normal amount.

Sunshine The total, as usual averaged over England and Wales, was 163 hours or 98% of the LTM.

The national figures are from Philip Eden's Weatherwatch column in the Sunday Telegraph.

AMPHIBIAN & REPTILE REPORT compiled by Dr C. H. Gallimore

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March/April 2014

During March and April there have been records of all eight regular indigenous Rutland amphibians and reptiles, plus a ninth transatlantic species that was also observed. A former herpetological recorder for the Society also sent records of all four amphibians from Belton, whence there had previously been no records.

The first **Frog** spawn to be reported was from a garden pond in Oakham on 11th March. In the following week reports were received of fresh spawn from Greetham, Morcott, Egleton, North Luffenham and Exton. By 31st March tadpoles were observed in Priors Coppice. Spawn was also noted in Wing and Belton – the latter a new site.

There were records of **Common Toads** on roads from 7th March in Exton (dead) and Wing (alive). Amplexus was observed in an Oakham garden pond on 31st March and they were heard calling near two of the hides in Manton Bay. Spawn was found in a Belton garden pond – a new site – and also in a field pond in Wing, where they have bred in the past, although not annually.



Adder, photo, Neil Talbot

Smooth Newts were abundant in two ponds in Wing and also in Belton. Of twenty-two ponds in the Rutland Water Nature Reserve that were examined in April they were found to be present in twelve. **Great Crested Newts** were found in thirteen of those twenty-two ponds. They were also reported from Empingham, Wing (including the recorder's cellar) and Belton, where a lone(ly) female was present.

Viviparous Lizards were seen on a number of occasions from 29th March at Ketton Quarry in three separate areas. On 23rd April eight were counted. A **Slow Worm** was seen in April near the Lyndon Visitor Centre.

Grass Snakes were reported from Belton, Prior's Coppice and Ketton, the first being on 31st March in Prior's Coppice. A minimum of six **Adders**

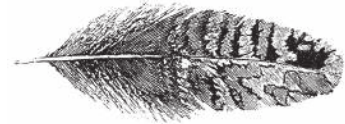
were seen by four separate observers at Ketton Quarry between 29th March and 4th April in three different areas.

Finally a **Red-eared Slider** *Trachemys scripta elegans* was seen and photographed in the Oakham Canal near the former Ashwell Prison – an unwelcome discarded pet presumably.

My thanks to the following who sent in records: T P Appleton, D Cole, R Edwards, J Harris, A Hill, P Killips, P Langston, A L Lawrence, T Mackrill, T Mitcham, P Scott, N Talbot and M Tyler.

BIRD REPORT compiled by T. Mitcham

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March/April 2014

Two hectic months peaked with an unlikely Rutland first – a Pied-billed Grebe at Rutland Water. It was in breeding plumage and attracted much attention during its two-day stay. A wide range of wildfowl remained at or visited the reservoirs including Whooper Swan, Garganey, Common Scoter, Smew and Red-breasted Merganser, with the Great Northern Diver remaining to the end of April. Waders had to contend with a lack of mud but April saw both godwits, Greenshank, Spotted Redshank and Whimbrel, among others, passing through. There was a good tern passage at both reservoirs, whilst passerine migrants – Cuckoo, hirundines and warblers – appeared on cue, with reasonable counts of some species.

My thanks to the following for their records: T Appleton, P Bennett, A J Biddle, M Branston, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, Dr C H Gallimore, B Galpin, M & G Griffin, M Grimes, J Harris, F Ingall, Dr C Jones, P Langston, A Lawrence, LROS, R Lemmon, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, G Morley, J W & M Nourish, L Park, D & B Parker, D Perril, P Rudkin, P Scott, L Worrall.

Whooper Swan. Noted at RW and EBR on 08.03, with seven at RW and 31 at EBR. 18 were at RWEg and nine in NA on 12.03. A late bird was at EBR on 19.04.

Pink-footed Goose. Two were at FHP on 07.03, with one at RW on 09.03 and three there on 15.03.

Egyptian Goose. Away from RW, where goslings were present from mid-April, there were breeding records from PC ponds (6 goslings on 17.04) and Ext Park (8 goslings on 19.04). Five were in BW on 05.04 and two were at Martinthorpe on 09.04.

Shelduck. Peak counts received were 18 at Martinthorpe on 16.04, 12 at EBR on 20.04 and three at FHP throughout April. There were pairs at LFP on 15.04 and near Wg on 28.04.

Mandarin Duck. A pair were on a pond in TunnW on 25.03, up to four visited Park House, Norm between 02 and 25.04, and there was a male on RW by Half Moon Spinney on 17.04, presumably one of the Norm birds. A pair flew in to FHP on 19.04.

Garganey. Three (one female) were at RWEg on 15.03, with a male still the next day. A pair were at RWEg from 18.04 to 30.04 with a third bird on 27.04.

Red-crested Pochard. Noted at RW on six dates between 08.03 and 08.04, with a max of four on 18.03. Four were at EBR on 18.03.

Scaup. Two were at RW(Old Hall) on 18.03 with one in SA on 20 and 21.03. Two were at RWEg on 15.04.

Long-tailed Duck. Three remained in RWNA to at least 11.04 with one on 16.04.

Common Scoter. Three were at RW(Dam) on 31.03.

Smew. A female was at RWEg between 08 and 18.03.

Red-breasted Merganser. A female remained at RWNA from 19.03 to 21.04.

Red-legged Partridge. A pair was in a Wg garden on 16.03 and two pairs were at QF on 24.04.

Grey Partridge. Singles were at Spy Corner (Cottes Airfield) on 05.04 and near Pilt next day, with a pair in Ext Park on 19.04.

Great Northern Diver. The RW bird was present to 30.04 – in breeding plumage on the latter date.

Gannet. One was at RW on 28.04.

Bittern. One was at RWEg on 02.03.

Little Egret. Regular at both reservoirs with four at EBR on 22.04.

- Great White Egret.** Two were briefly at RWEg on 30.03.
- Pied-billed Grebe.** One in breeding plumage was at RWEW on 09–10.04, a first county record. Although widespread in the Americas, there have been only forty British records to the end of 2012.
- Little Grebe.** Noted at FHP and Clips Ford in April.
- Slavonian Grebe.** One was in RWNA from 07.03 to 13.04.
- Black-necked Grebe.** Up to five (05.03) were in RWNA to 29.03, when one was present. Five were at EBR on 31.03.
- Red Kite.** Four were over Bden on 17.03.
- Marsh Harrier.** Reported on nine dates at RW between 13.03 and 26.04, when an imm male was seen.
- Sparrowhawk.** Displaying birds were noted over PGW, WardW and Westland Wood in March.
- Buzzard.** Five over BarnsG on 27.04 was the peak count. Two active nests were noted in hedgerow trees.
- Osprey.** The first RW bird returned on 17.03, with regular pairs established by early April, apart from the Lynd male, who failed to appear.
- Kestrel.** Reported from FHP, Ext Park, EBR and RWLr, where an active nestbox is being monitored.
- Merlin.** A male was at Cottes Airfield on 28.03.
- Hobby.** One was at RWEg on 27.04 with two on 29.04.
- Peregrine.** Singles were at FHP on 07.03, RWSA on 19.03 and Martinthorpe on 02 and 24.04.
- Avocet.** Present at RWEg from 08.03 onwards, mainly one pair but a max of eight on 27.03.
- Oystercatcher.** 23 were at RW on 16.03.
- Grey Plover.** One flew over RWEg on 22.04.
- Lapwing.** 23 were at RW on 16.03. Birds were noted at breeding sites at RWEg, EBR, Ext Park and GtCast in April.
- Little Ringed Plover.** One was at EBR on 31.03 and there were two at RWEg on 04.04, with three on 12.04.
- Ringed Plover.** Present at RWEg from 15.03 onwards with a max of eight on 10.04, but five from mid-April.
- Whimbrel.** An early bird was at RW (Man Bay) on 25.03. The next flew over Leigh on 21.04 and there were regular records at RWEg from 26.04 with five on 28 and 30.04. One was by a pond near PC on 29–30.04.
- Curlew.** Ten were at RW on 16.03 with four there on 12.04. Displaying pairs were noted at Cottes Airfield, Seaton Meadows and Merry's Meadow in April.
- Black-tailed Godwit.** Up to four (17.04) were at RWEg between 09.03 and 18.04, with 47 present on 24.04.
- Bar-tailed Godwit.** Singles were at RWEg from 20 to 30.04.
- Sanderling.** One was at RWEg on 27.04.
- Dunlin.** Fairly regular at both reservoirs throughout these months to 27.04 with max counts of 14 at EBR on 01.03 and 12 at RW on 28.03.
- Common Sandpiper.** One at EBR on 18.04 was the first record with another there on 24.04, and then singles at RWEg on 25 and 29.04.
- Green Sandpiper.** One was at LFP on 15.03 with one at RWEg from 27.03 to 04.04.
- Spotted Redshank.** One was at RWEg on 11.04.
- Greenshank.** Singles were at RW on 11 and 29.04 and EBR on 24.04.
- Woodcock.** March records were from Westland Wood on 02 (three), Cottes Wood on 03 (six), PGW on 06 (one) and TunnW on 07 (two). One was flushed near Wg on 01.04.
- Snipe.** Five were at EBR on 01.03 and there were three at RW on 16.03. One or two were at FHP and Banthorpe GP between 14.03 and 19.04. Six were at LFP on 05.03 with an excellent 23 there on 30.03. Seven were at EBR on 22.04. A much better spring passage than usual.
- Kittiwake.** 14 were in RWNA on 19.03.
- Little Gull.** 1st winter adults were at RW on 28–29.03 and EBR on 31.03. Nine (eight adults) were at RW on 21.04.
- Mediterranean Gull.** Singles were at RW on 18 and 19.03, with one also at EBR on 18.03. Two adults were at RWNA/Eg on 29.03 and 04.04.
- Iceland Gull.** A 1st winter bird was at EBR briefly on 10.03.
- Black Tern.** One or two were at RWEg between 17 and 28.04 with three on 29.04. One was at EBR on 20.04.
- Sandwich Tern.** One or two were at EBR on 01.04, with one there on 17.04 and two on 22.04. One was at RWEg on 08–09.04.
- Common Tern.** One at EBR on 01.04 was the earliest bird, with birds at RW from 04.04. Five were at EBR on 22.04 and birds seemed settled to breed at both reservoirs by mid-April.
- Arctic Tern.** One at RWEg on 17.04 was the first record with one the following day. On 20.04, 16 passed through at EBR, and nine at RW, and 19 were at EBR on 22.04. Up to five were at RW between 22 and 26.04.
- Stock Dove.** 31 were on stubble at Chapel Farm, Burl on 04.03. Singles fed in Oak gardens on 17–18.03 and 31.03. I think this is the first time that we have recorded this habit.
- Cuckoo.** Song was first heard at RW and Leigh on 17.04, with the next at GreetW Far on 19.04. By the end of the month singing birds had been heard at BW, PC, WardW, Wg and Martinthorpe.

- Barn Owl.** Singles were noted at Wg, Bden and Martinsthorpe. Four pairs are thought to be present on the RW reserve this year.
- Little Owl.** Singles were at EBR on 24.03 and BCF on 06.04.
- Tawny Owl.** Nestboxes were in use at Chapel Farm, near Burl, TunnW and RW reserve.
- Short-eared Owl.** Singles were at EBR on 08.03, Cottes Airfield on 28.03 and RWEg on 10.04.
- Swift.** One at RWMan Bay on 19.04 was our only April record.
- Kingfisher.** Singles were on the R.Welland west of the A1 on 04.04 and at Banthorpe GP on 17.04.
- Green Woodpecker.** Calling birds were heard in BW, TunnW, PGW, BarnsLW and at FHP.
- Great Spotted Woodpecker.** Drumming birds were well reported in both months with records from TunnW, CPW, PC, PGW, FHP and BW, where 2 were noted on 01.04 and 3 on 27.04.
- Raven.** Breeding has been confirmed at one site with birds present at two other likely locations. Five were over Leigh on 05.03 with others noted over Wg, Pilt, Stam and Martinsthorpe. (See also page 20.)
- Goldcrest.** 18 were singing in BW on 19.04.
- Willow Tit.** March records came from Martinsthorpe, RWGgorse, Pilt, Leigh and near Wg.
- Marsh Tit.** One or two were noted at WardW, CPW, Horn Spinney, RWHambW/Ggorse/Berrybutts.
- Sand Martin.** Two at RW on 11.03 were the first. 'Several' were at EBR on 21.03 with c.300 at RW on 22.03 and 100 the following day. Not seen at FHP until 26.04.
- Swallow.** First noted on 16.03 at RWNA. One was at FHP on 05.04, an early date for the site and they had returned to breeding sites in Bden on 15.04.
- House Martin.** One at EBR on 05.04 was the first record with two there on 14.02 and three at Bden on 16.04.
- Cetti's Warbler.** One sang strongly throughout both months at RWEg.
- Chiffchaff.** Song was heard at RWGgorse from 02 to 08.03 and at Leigh on 09.03. Three sang at Martinsthorpe on 10.03. From 14.03 into April, singing birds were more widely distributed with three or four noted in CQ, PGW, TunnW and 16 in BW (01.04). 42 were singing in BW on 27.04.
- Willow Warbler.** First reported from KQ on 04.04. Song was heard in TunnW on 05.04 with the next in BW on 09.04. Four were at QF on 24.04. 24 were in song at Leigh on 25.04 increasing to 27 on 30.04. 17 sang in BW on 27.04.
- Blackcap.** Up to two males and two females were in an Oak garden from 01.03 to 26.03. Two sang in CPW on 31.03, our first presumed summer migrants. From the next day singing birds were more widespread with records from FHP, TunnW, BCF, QF and BW, where 29 were in song on 27.04.
- Garden Warbler.** Three singing at RW on 22.04 were the first. On 27.04 there were three in TunnW and 15 in BW, whilst a count along the RW cycle track from Man Bridge to Eg the next day found 14 singing.
- Lesser Whitethroat.** One at Leigh on 12.04 was the first with one at RW the next day. On 14.04, five were singing at BCF. Other records came from GtCast, QF and Leigh, where eight were singing on 30.04.
- Whitethroat.** The first record was at RW on 13.04, with the next not until 24.04 at QF and GtCast. Noted also at BW, BCF, EBR and Leigh, where 17 were singing on 30.04.
- Grasshopper Warbler.** Singles were reeling at RW on 17, 24 and 28.04. One was at Leigh on 21.04, with two on 30.04.
- Sedge Warbler.** First heard at RWEg on 04.04 and well distributed there from 10.04.
- Reed Warbler.** First reported from RWEg on 18.04.
- Nuthatch.** Four pairs were noted in BW on 01.04. Other records came from FHP, TunnW, BarnsG, CPW, PGW and WardW.
- Treecreeper.** Song was regular at FHP throughout both months. One was noted in BW on 27.04.
- Wren.** This species seems to have wintered in good numbers – 43 were singing in BW on 27.04.
- Fieldfare.** Large flocks were 150 in Ext Park (04.03) and 200 there (25.03) with 300 near Rid on 29.03. A totally white bird but without pink eyes was photographed at Tgh on 15.03. The last records were of two near PC on 18.04 and one over Leigh on 29.04.
- Song Thrush.** Breeding in a Bden garden – hatched eggshells found on 25.04.
- Redwing.** c.50 were at CPW on 12.03 and five were at FHP on 05.04.
- Mistle Thrush.** A pair were nesting in a Wg garden on 06.03. 3 were singing in BW on 09.04.
- Nightingale.** Two were singing in Greet Wood Far on 19.04 and one sang near Bushy Wood, Leigh on 29–30.04.
- Black Redstart.** The bird at RW(Dam) was present to at least 15.03.
- Redstart.** A male was in a hedge near Norm on 12.04.
- Wheatear.** Two at Luff Airfield on 11.03 were the earliest arrivals. Well recorded subsequently with one or two at GreetGC, RWEg/Dam/EW, Cottes Airfield, LFP, Martinsthorpe, EBR and Ext Park. The highest totals were 23 at Luff Airfield on 20.04 and 14 there next day.
- House Sparrow.** c.15 visited an Oak garden daily throughout March.

Tree Sparrow. Regular throughout in small numbers during both months on feeders at RWLr Centre. Two were at Whiss on 06.03.

Yellow Wagtail. One at EBR on 21.03 was the first record, with one at RWWhit on 04.04. Eight were at RWDam on 11.04 and breeding birds were back in Ext Park by 13.04, with three males in one cereal field.

Grey Wagtail. Singles were by North Brook at FHP on 02.03 and at RWDam on 28.03. 2 were at EBR on 16.03; one flew over FHP on 19.04.

White Wagtail. Reported from RWEg/Dam between 11 and 24.04, with a max of 12 on 12.04.

Meadow Pipit. Spring passage in March saw 40 NW at Leigh on 17, 80 NW at RW on 19 and c.100 NW there on 21. Song flighting was noted at RWEW on 26.03, Cottes Airfield on 30.03, EBR on 20.04 and at FHP on 26.04.

Rock Pipit. One was at RWEg on 25.03.

Water Pipit. One was at RWMan Bay on 25.03.

Brambling. The Leigh roost was active to 30.03, when 200 were still using it. The peak count there was 270 on 09.03. Elsewhere, birds were noted at RWNA/Lax Hill between 08.03 and 08.04 with 21 on 26.03. April birds were noted from 1 to 19 at

Rid, RW, Martinsthorpe, Leigh and BW with 25 at RW on 14.04, and three in BW on 19.04.

Goldfinch. Countryside flocks were 70 at Pilt on 16.03 and 50 at KQ and 23 at BCF on 19.03. The only garden record was on six taking nyger seed at Oak throughout March.

Siskin. Up to four visited a Man garden regularly throughout March to 28.03 and one was in an Oak garden on 08/09.03.

Lesser Redpoll. Between 02.03 and 26.03 up to three were at TunnW, Whiss, Man and Oak, the latter two locations being gardens. Six were at PC on 02.03 and 17 at RWHamb on 27.03. One was again at Man on 25.04 with three over LFP on 25.04 and one over Leigh on 29.04.

Common Crossbill. A single was heard over Pilt on 22.04. There were seven in BW on 05.04 and one over BarnsW on 11.04.

Bullfinch. Up to six were in scrub at PC and PGW between 02 and 16.03.

Reed Bunting. Two fed in a Man garden from 04 to 26.03 with one on 30.03. A max of four was in an Oak garden on 28.03 and up to four visited a Stam garden throughout March to 10.04.

March 2014 Wildfowl Counts

	Rutland Water 16.03	Eyebrook Reservoir 16.03	Fort Henry Ponds/Exton Pk 14.03	Banthorpe Gravel Pit 14.03	Holywell Lake 30.03
Mute Swan	91	46	7	2	2
Pink-footed Goose			2		
Greylag Goose	316	22	184	7	7
Canada Goose	133	18	4		28
Barnacle Goose	2				
Egyptian Goose	44				
Shelduck	25	5			
Wigeon	1457	41	69		4
Gadwall	132	14	37		16
Teal	149	64	2	2	2
Mallard	384	13	60	5	20
Garganey	1				
Shoveler	17		1		
Pochard	8				
Tufted Duck	555	43	74	8	19
Scaup	3				
Long-tailed Duck	3				
Goldeneye	160	26			
Smew	1				
Goosander	2				

continued

continued	Rutland Water 16.03	Eyebrook Reservoir 16.03	Fort Henry Ponds/Exton Pk 14.03	Banthorpe Gravel Pit 14.03	Holywell Lake 30.03
Great Northern Diver	1				
Little Grebe	14		3		5
Great Crested Grebe	174	17			
Slavonian Grebe	1				
Cormorant	130	13	1		
Little Egret	7	1			
Grey Heron	6	2			
Moorhen	28	5	14	3	12
Coot	467	5	56		15

BOTANY NOTES compiled by John Rodgers

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Taking on the role of botany recorder, I can't fill the hole left by Graham's demise; I can't do the expert bit, but I can do the administrative part. I've already received records by email and by post. I hope that using email will be easier for most. (The proposals from the Recorders' Group are set out on page 1 in this *Fieldfare*.) The post always works, however.

I've been in the south of France where there is an abundance of wild flowers – asphodels, wild tulips, fritillaries and orchids – so I don't know if this year in Rutland spring is early or not. Certainly there were plenty of flowers appearing at the beginning of the month.

I've had records from some of the Verge Recorders, and some field records. There haven't yet been many, and there are some remarkable

gaps. So far there only seem to be bluebells in two sites! Nobody saw any snowdrops and very few primroses. Do send in your records, or if you haven't been in the habit of recording what you have seen, then please do begin.

Are there any verge records for 2013? I have been trying to catch up for the 2013 annual report but there seem to be records outstanding. I'm sure there are verges which have been covered in the past which aren't being dealt with this year. I know Graham was always trying to encourage people to take this up. I am repeating the same request. WE DO NEED MORE VERGE RECORDING.

There has been one notable record: a specimen of *Corydalis cheilanthifolia* (the Fumitory family) which is only the second record for Rutland.

WE DO NEED ALL YOUR OBSERVATIONS!

BUTTERFLY NOTES compiled by Alistair Lawrence

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On behalf of the Society I should like to begin by recording my grateful thanks to Monty Tyler (the first RNHS Butterfly Recorder) who has very kindly donated to the RNHS a collection of colour slides depicting Rutland butterflies, including importantly species no longer found in the county or in the case of the Chequered Skipper now extinct in England and Wales.

March/April 2014

The mild winter followed by some sunny and warm days in March and April led to butterflies suddenly becoming very active and appearing in some cases much earlier than in 2013.

The first report for a **Dingy Skipper** comes from Ketton Quarry where two were seen on 23 April, and a week later a single **Grizzled Skipper** was observed at the same site.

Brimstones have been recorded widely throughout Rutland during this period. The highest count comes from Clipsham Park Wood where 39 were seen on 9 March. Single **Large Whites** were reported at the Rutland Water reserves and Burley Wood during April, and in the same month two reports of **Small White** came from Egleton reserve and Ketton Quarry. **Green-veined Whites** were seen at four sites with 4 at Burley Wood on 24 April, including a mating pair.

Orange Tips have been recorded from around Rutland, especially at the reserves and quarries, with 6 males and 1 female seen at Egleton reserve on 14 April.

Green Hairstreaks made an early appearance at Ketton Quarry on 19 April, with 6 being observed above Donkey Paddock on 21 April.

On 21 April, single **Holly Blues** were seen at both Ketton Quarry and Barrowden.

Many reports have been received for the **Peacock** during March and April, with 10 being counted between Tolethorpe and Little Casterton on 30 March and a similar number the day before at Clipsham Park Wood. 14 were recorded at Egleton reserve on 14 April.

Commas were seen frequently during March and April, especially at the quarries and reserves. On 9 March at least 6 were counted on pussy willow at Ketton Quarry.

In March and April **Small Tortoiseshells** were seen regularly around Oakham and Uppingham and at the quarries and reserves. The highest count was 6 at Lyndon reserve on 16 March.

The first **Speckled Wood** report comes from Clipsham Park Wood on 12 April where a single specimen was observed on the edge of Yew Tree Avenue. On 14 April four were counted at Egleton Reserve.

My thanks to the following for their contributions: C Adkin, A & L Biddle, R Burchnell, C Butterfield, A & J Comber, J Crosby, R & C Edwards, J & F Foster, M Grimes, C Jones, A Lawrence, R Lemmon, J Mallett, P & E Mann, T Mitcham, J Myers, D Needham, E Northen, D & B Parker, D Perril, P Rudkin, P Scott, B & J Taylor, M Tyler, D Whitefield, L Worrall

MOTH NOTES compiled by Jean Harvey

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March/April 2014

The reed bed trap at Rutland Water was operated as usual during January and February but only the odd moth was caught, resulting in a total of 9 species in all. March arrived and the Spring species began to emerge here. The best night was on March 14th when 1583 moths of 15 species were found in five traps operated over-night. Other totals were 281 moths of 14 species on the 17th, 244 moths of 9 species on the 24th and 317 moths of 18 species on the 31st. April, however, saw the numbers of moths drop, as the Spring species finished and early Summer species started to emerge.

We visited Eyebrook Reservoir three times during April where the highest total was achieved on the 2nd, this being 145 moths of 11 species. The following two visits on the 12th and 26th were both disappointing with only 8 and 7 species being recorded respectively.

The garden trap at Barrowden was operated 15 times during March and April with fairly low numbers of the usual species. On March 31st a Blossom Underwing was caught, which was not new for this garden but is not a common moth. The best news from this site however, was on April 20th when a micromoth *Agonopterix purpurea* was caught. This has now been confirmed by Adrian Russell (County Recorder for VC55) as a new species for the Vice-County, which is excellent news.

The only card received for this recording period was regarding the activities of an Angleshades caterpillar, when it became entangled in spider's silk threads at 9 pm in a car port at Barrowden on March 19th. On discovery, the spider retreated, the caterpillar was 'cleaned' and had disappeared by 10 pm.

My thanks to Ron Follows and Linda Worrall for their contributions.

ORTHOPTERA REPORT compiled by Phil Rudkin

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No records were received for this period, but the present mini heat wave should bring on the emergence of the nymphs more quickly this season – records will be eagerly awaited. New sites will be especially welcome, as this is the final year before the National Orthoptera Atlas is published, and new sites are important for RNHS to be included.

PLANT GALLS REPORT compiled by Roy Lemmon

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March 2014

Just two records this month, one the rust on Bramble reported from Ketton Quarry on the 13th and the other, which was accompanied by a photograph, was of a large growth on the bark of a Beech tree in Clipsham Park Wood (see right). Despite their size these are often not reported, perhaps being regarded as something other than a gall. They are difficult to apportion a cause, the most likely is a bacterium perhaps introduced following abrasion by an animal early in the tree's life.

April 2014

A busier month with a total of 16 records of which 10 were rusts. This latter is much more than is usual at this time and is probably a reflection of a wet and relatively warm winter.

Verge 7 on the 10th had just one, a rust gall on Groundsel, and the same was found on the 17th at Tickencote along with four other rusts on Lesser Celandine, Sweet Violet, Sun Spurge and Common Mallow. The RNHS visit to Priors Coppice on the 19th produced a bumper bundle of 8 galls, half of which were rusts. In addition to these there was a leaf curl gall on Midland Hawthorn caused by a mite, an aphid gall on Redcurrant leaves, one which may be familiar to gardeners, an old Marble gall on Oak caused by a gall wasp, and another bark gall this time on Field Maple where the bark looked as if it had been cut and had healed.



Photo, Phil Rudkin

Egleton on the 21st produced two records, one a rust on the anthers of Red Campion which causes these organs to enlarge, and the other a leaf edge curl of Spindle, this one caused by a mite. The anther rust is again early in the season probably due to weather conditions.

The last card of the month from Burley Wood had just two galls, one inevitably a rust on Bluebell leaves and the other currant galls on Oak. These look just like unripe redcurrants initially and then 'ripen' and change colour. Like the Marble gall they are caused by a gall wasp and are some of the earliest galls on Oak.

Thanks to: M Grimes, C R Jones, R Lemmon and P Rudkin for their records.

INSECTS AND OTHERS compiled by Gill Chiverton

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March 2014

DIPTERA

Crane Fly *Tipulidae* – An early crane fly was noticed indoors at Barrowden – it was promptly put outside to fly away.

Hoverflies *Syrphidae* – several hoverflies were noted in a garden at Barrowden.

Common Bee-fly *Bombylius major* – one was noted hovering in a garden at Barrowden.

HYMENOPTERA

White-tailed Bumble Bee *Bombus lucorum* – one recorded in an Oakham garden.

Buff-tailed Bumble Bee *Bombus terrestris* – <8 were noted at Ketton Quarry; they were also first noted at the beginning of the month at Barrowden and then observed many times by the month's end ('garden constantly buzzing with bees').

Red-tailed Bumble Bee *Bombus lapidarius* – one observed at beginning of month in Barrowden, then often by month's end.

Early Bumble Bee *Bombus pratorum* – one queen noted in an Oakham garden.

COLEOPTERA

Burying Beetle *Silpha atrata* – single insects were noted on two occasions by different recorders at Ketton Quarry.

Lesser Stag Beetle *Dorcus parallelipedus* – two specimens were noted near each other under a large stone at Ketton Quarry.

7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella 7-punctata* – observed in 'ones and twos' over several days at Barrowden.

Varied Carpet Beetle *Anthrenus verbasci* – one noted indoors at Barrowden.

OTHER ARTHROPODS

ISOPODA – Woodlice

Striped Pill Woodlouse *Armadillidium nasatum* – observed at Bloody Oaks Quarry.

Common Pill Woodlouse *Armadillidium vulgare* – also noted at Bloody Oaks Quarry.

Common Shiny Woodlouse *Oniscus asellus* – again noted at Bloody Oaks Quarry.

GASTROPODA – Slugs and Snails

Leopard Slug *Limax maximus* – one noted on peanuts (for hedgehogs) at Barrowden.

Snail *Ena obscura* – one recorded at Bloody Oaks Quarry.

Snail *Discus rotundatus* – several recorded at BOQ.

Snail *Oxychilus draparnaudi* – one recorded at BOQ.

Snail *Candidula gigaxii* – one record from BOQ.

Empty shells of the following species were also observed at Bloody Oaks Quarry – *Cepaea hortensis* and *Helix aspersa*.

April 2014

DIPTERA

Common Bee-fly *Bombylius major* – 7 were noted on Verge 7 and 3 were recorded at Tickencote.

Drone Fly *Eristalis tenax* – one specimen noted at Priors Coppice.

HYMENOPTERA

Social Wasps

Hornet *Vespa crabro* – a beautiful queen wasp was noted hibernating under loose bark at Priors Coppice.

Bees

Ashen Bee *Andrena cineraria* – one recorded at Bloody Oaks Quarry.

Tawny Mining Bee *Andrena fulva* – two nest mounds with one bee noted nearby were recorded in a garden at Barrowden; two nest mounds were also recorded at Bloody Oaks Quarry.

Red Mason Bee *Osmia rufa* – one specimen recorded on Verge 7 and one noted at Tickencote.

Spring Flower Bee *Anthophora plumipes* – good numbers of these insects were noted all month visiting a Barrowden garden.

White-tailed Bumble Bee *Bombus lucorum* – a female bee was noted at Tickencote and 2 individual bees were noted nectaring in Priors Coppice.

Buff-tailed Bumble Bee *Bombus terrestris* – single female bees were noted at Tickencote, Burley Wood and Verge 7.

Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum* – 2 individuals were noted in Burley Wood.

Red-tailed Bumble Bee *Bombus lapidarius* – single female bees were recorded at Tickencote and Burley Wood, and 2 females were also noted on Verge 7.

COLEOPTERA

The following ground beetle records were all received as a result of the RNHS outing to Priors Coppice:

Ground Beetles

Pterostichus madidus – <5 individuals all beneath logs.

Notiophilus biguttatus – one specimen found in leaf litter.

Loricera pilicornis – 2 found beneath logs on damp clay.

Cychrus caraboides – 2 individuals found on moss-covered log.

Rove Beetle *Tachyporus chrysomelinus* – one individual found at Prior's Coppice ('smallest beetle of the day with lovely bronze-coloured elytra').

Fungus Beetle *Scaphidium 4-maculatum* – 2 specimens found under loose bark (also at Prior's Coppice).

7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella 7-punctata* – 2 noted as active on Verge 7.

Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* – one noted at Tickencote.

Raspberry Beetle *Byturus tormentosus* – one specimen noted on primrose flower at Priors Coppice.

Lily Beetle *Lilioceris lili* – 4 individuals recorded from garden at Barrowden.

Flower Beetle *Meligethes aeneas* – 6 or 7 individuals noted on primroses at Priors Coppice.

OTHER ARTHROPODS

CHILOPODA Centipedes

Lithobius forficatus – the most abundant occupant of loose bark on fallen wood in Priors Coppice.

ISOPODA Woodlice

Common Shiny Woodlouse *Oniscus asellus* – many noted under logs and other debris at Priors Coppice.

GASTROPODA Snails

Candidula gigaxii – <3 individuals noted at Burley Wood.

Cepaea nemoralis – empty shell noted at Burley Wood.

Cepaea hortensis – one individual noted as fully grown among mossy debris at Priors Coppice, and one yellow form seen at Burley Wood.

Many thanks to the following for records received: G Chiverton, M Grimes, R Lemmon, T Newton, D Perril and L Worrall.

GLOW-WORM NOTES

compiled by Linda Worrall

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Larva saga at Ketton Quarry

Larvae are notoriously tricky to spot, but Ketton Quarry seems determined to help us! In October 2010 the Wildlife Trust was doing some work, and at mid-day on the 19th, in the Grove area at the top of Pit Lane, a larva was discovered. Takes keen eyes and a knowledge of what they look like.

Then the next year, on May 6th, Peter Scott was in the Quarry looking for butterflies and spotted a glow-worm larva crossing an open area of short grass. At this time of year, larvae nearing the end of their second year of life seem to wander about in broad daylight as well as at night, eating as many snails as possible, fattening themselves up and getting ready to pupate. Larvae can glow a bit, but you wouldn't be able to see their glimmer during the day.

And now, on **4th April 2014**: on the unsurfaced section of Pit Lane next to North Glade, one large 2 cm long glow-worm larva was found clasped onto the shell of a live snail. Furthermore, on the same day, another, 1.5 cm long, was clinging to the underside of a tin sheet put out for recording reptiles near the Geology carpark. Jenny Harris and Neill Talbot found the second one (together with a common lizard) during Trust work; the first was shown to them by a man who said he



Photo, Neill Talbot

had just seen it actually eating the snail. So many thanks to all, and particularly to KQ for being the habitat.

Please let me know if you see any glowing females this summer, their tails lit up with the characteristic bright neon-green cold chemical light. They are showing off to attract a flying male (who hardly glows at all) and they could be up a grass stalk, on bare ground, along rides in woods, in hedge bottoms, round field margins, on a lane verge, near train tracks, on walls. Imagine – you could be the one to discover a whole new colony just because you went looking on the off-chance, after dusk, around 10.30 pm to midnight, from

mid-June to mid-July. Whatever the weather – once the adult female emerges from her pupa she cannot eat, so has about 12 days to attract a mate, lay eggs and die. Rain won't stop her, though she may find grass stalks a bit slippery so stay low down. Adult males fly best without wind or rain; they need to conserve energy because they too die shortly after emerging but don't fly far anyway. The ground has to be warm enough for glow-worms (g-ws) to transform themselves from larva to adult, but usually English summers are adequate; here's hoping! The most magical time to come across them is on a warm mid-summer's night under a full moon, and this year there is indeed a full moon on June 23rd (whether it will be visible is another matter of course).

If you see some, don't walk on their ground – there may be others nearby you could squash, and don't pick them up or touch them. We need every one to lay eggs to help keep the species going; once plentiful, g-ws have had a hard time living with modern humankind and numbers have dropped greatly. Take a torch, but if you keep it on you won't see the glow. Look out for snails too and don't squash them either – when the eggs hatch, the glow-worm larvae need snails to feed

on: g-ws are beetles, and inject their mouthparts behind the snail's head and suck up the juices. Don't be fooled by raindrops on grass or bushes – moonlight or torchlight makes water shine a bit like a g-w. Also, white flowers can make you think there's one there: but once you've seen the real thing, there's just nothing like it.

To get an idea what they look like, you could try Ketton Quarry, or the lane beside the grassy top of the cutting for the main line at Essendine, or Luffenham Road and Back Road verges in Barrowden, or Barnack Hills and Holes where on one night in the 1990s a group of members counted 400, though no-one has seen that many there since. No guarantees. They could be shining one night and gone the next (hopefully all mated!)

Please will you let me know, card, phone or email worrall6redland@talktalk.net, where and when you spotted any, whether at usual sites or a new one. I'd like to know of g-ws spotted outside Rutland too. And perhaps when you're on holiday, home or abroad, have a late night? Good hunting!

PS: Tell me as well if there were snails around or not – glow-worm larvae need to eat them!

BAT REPORT compiled by Jenny Harris

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January/April 2014

There were no bat records from RNHS members for January and February, although it is quite possible the mild evenings brought some bats out to forage for moths and midges. During a visit to South Luffenham church on 8.2, I found droppings of **Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus* sp and **Brown Long-eared bat** *Plecotus auritus* that seemed fresh, indicating recent activity in the church.

Two visits were made to an east Rutland hibernaculum with the following results:

- 12.1 6 **Natterer's** bats *Myotis nattereri*
1 pipistrelle
- 16.2 4 Natterer's
1 **Daubenton's** bat *Myotis daubentonii*
1 unidentified *Myotis* sp.
5 pipistrelle sp.

No Barbastelle bats *Barbastellus barbastella* were found in the site this year, although one or two have been found there in the past.

In February I was asked to collect a brown long-

eared bat that had become trapped on a sticky fly-trap in a loft. Caught by its wings, tail and body, the bat was completely unable to move and was lucky to have been found quickly. Olive oil dissolved the glue, allowing the bat to gradually prise itself free. After giving him a drink and some mealworms, most of the olive oil was washed off with baby shampoo, carefully rinsing the soap off with luke-warm water. It took some time for the male bat to restore his fur to its normal fluffy state, but he quickly gained weight and was released on 17.4. The stiff card was so sticky that merely brushing it with a wing-tip would have caused the bat to become trapped. So although the bat was from Tugby, I thought it worth drawing attention to this particular hazard faced by bats when they enter lofts to seek flies that over-winter in roof spaces that may not be summer roosts. I recommend that if such traps must be used in lofts they should be 'bat-guarded', for instance in a cage of chicken wire, so that flies but not bats will be caught.

There were two records in March. The first bat seen in flight was flying at dusk in a Wing

garden on 20.3, and my first bat of the year was a **Common Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus Pipistrellus* foraging high over my Oakham garden on 29.3. Feeding buzzes were heard, indicating it was successful in finding insects.

The first bat observed in Linda Worrall's Barrowden garden was a probable pipistrelle, flying round the house on 10.4. Charles Gallimore noted plenty of droppings under eaves on his extension on 14.4. It was a warm day on 16.4 and there were three sightings in the evening at Redland Close Barrowden. In Burley Wood there were masses of insects and many **Soprano Pipistrelles** *P. pygmaeus* and a few **Nathusius' Pipistrelles** *P. nathusii* were taking advantage of

the feast. Ten Nathusius' pipistrelles emerged from a known roost, and there was much interaction with the sopranos. During the survey a **Noctule** bat *Nyctalus noctula* was heard, then seen flying westwards over an area of conifers along part of the southern edge of the wood.

From 19.4, up to three soprano pipistrelles were seen and heard foraging in an Oakham garden, and on 24.4 a common pipistrelle was recorded at the same site.

On 4.4, Charles Gallimore noted plenty of trilobed droppings on polythene sheeting in his outbuildings, indicating the presence of bats from his brown long-eared colony.

My thanks to A & J Comber, C Gallimore, J Harris and L Worrall.

MAMMAL REPORT compiled by Linda Biddle

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March/April 2014

A bumper bundle of reports this month have kept me busy, maybe because of the lovely spring we've had, or perhaps the focus on digital recording has turned members' minds to sending in reports! Not that many members sent their records digitally – but hopefully members will get used to the idea over the summer. Thanks to all who have sent in reports, by whatever method!

The most exciting find this time was a **Water Shrew** found at RWNR while working in the reedbeds. It was caught and examined before being released. It is some years since we had a report of a Water Shrew, and it's good to know they are still around.

A large number of **Otter** records came from RWNR, mostly of footprints and spraint on mink rafts, over the whole of March and April. At Fort Henry fresh spraint was also found under the brick bridge, on a large stone which was under water for most of the winter. All records of **Stoats** come in March, on two occasions on the cycle track at Gibbet's Gorse, one seen at Martinthorpe, and 2 at Leighfield fishponds, both carrying small dead moles. At Exton Park a stoat was seen hunting along a ride in Tunnely Wood, and at Holywell one quickly crossed the road into the hall grounds. At Egleton and near Lyndon Centre stoats also crossed the road. Droppings found and photographed at Clipsham Park Wood by Phil Rudkin (thank you Phil) were probably stoat, though it is difficult to identify positively

without any idea of size and smell! (I now have visions of lots of packets of assorted pooh being pushed through my letterbox, for identification, and while I'm always interested, hopefully you won't all go out collecting at once!) Photographs (preferable) are often made more useful by including something, for example a coin, to give an idea of size. Two reports of **Weasels** came from RWNR, one running along the east side of Berrybutts spinney, and the other from Gibbet's Gorse.

Many of the **Badger** records were of road casualties; following last year's successful breeding period, lots are being killed on the roads. On the A1 near the Stretton junction I counted 4 on the northbound carriageway, 3 on the southbound, at the end of April, and 5 were seen between Oakham and the A1. However, active setts and latrines are also reported from several areas of the county, and in general badgers are doing well. In early March a **Fox** was a road casualty at Whitwell, and others live animals were seen at Clipsham, Egleton, Oakham near sewage works, and at Clipsham Park Wood one foraged along a ride. At Exton Park a very grey individual, with black marking around its muzzle, and black ears, was seen close to the entrance to an earth in Tunnely Wood.

At Barrowden, Linda Worrall has had regular visits from **Hedgehogs** throughout March and April, often more than one at a time, and on 12th April a huffing sound was heard, like part of the courting behaviour. On 16th April a

large hedgehog was seen circling a smaller one, and making the huffing noise which goes with courtship. Hedgehogs visited all through April 'even when raining', and courtship was seen again on 27th April, this time with a third animal standing by. Other members have been feeding hedgehogs in their gardens, at Normanton, Oakham, and in Stamford they come to food put out for them. The **Long-tailed Field Mouse** has again been visiting Linda, picking up one nut at a time and carrying it away under the carport door. In Stamford too a field mouse has been collecting sunflower seeds, running along the branch of an ivy-covered pear tree, and disappearing into the ivy, then returning to collect another. A **Common Shrew** was found dead on a pathway on Little Casterton Road, Stamford, and 2 others were seen under reptile shelters in Tunnely Wood. A **Bank Vole** was found on the bank of an overflow lake at Ketton Quarry, under a reptile shelter. A bank vole was also seen in the wall of Dr Gallimore's garden in Wing. **Moles** have been busy digging in two areas of Prior's Coppice, and at Barnsdale, Burley and Pickworth Woods.

Water Voles have survived the winter well, thanks to the relatively mild weather, and at Egleton reserve droppings were found in many areas, feeding signs very obvious near Shoveler Hide, and in the channel in front of Snipe Hide, where neat piles of chopped vegetation were clearly seen. At Wader scrape, water voles in the reed bed just in front of the hide have entertained Osprey watchers, as they swim to and fro across the open channels. Evidence is also present at the Oakham canal, and Fort Henry.

Thank you for your interesting reports: A Biddle, M Branston, T Caldicott, R & C Edwards, C H Gallimore, M & G Griffin, J Harris, P Langston, A Lawrence, R Lemmon, T Mitcham, P Rudkin, D Whitefield, L Worrall.

MYCOLOGY NOTES compiled by Linda Worrall

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April 2014

A brief note about some springtime fungi – I was delighted to hear from Barbara and Don Parker that after several years without them, **Morels** were back at Clipsham Quarry. On 8th April they found 4 Morels *Morchella esculenta* by the Stable Block and 6 Semifree Morels *Mitrophora semilibra* nearby in the wood edge. Equally, Tim Caldicott reported six Semifrees in a group on a footpath under trees near Manton SK876046, a new site for us.

A total of 21 reports of **Hares** have been received, single animals or two at a time, from Pickworth, Walk Farm, Tickencote, Little Casterton Road near Stamford, Ryhall Heath, Greetham Valley Golf Club, and RWNR where one is often seen near Lax Hill, and others at Fields 17, 23, 25 and near Pintail hide. **Rabbits** are seen on verges at Tinwell, Dr Gallimore's garden, Wing, and at Barrowden, Seaton Road, little baby rabbits were seen. They are also present at RWNR, Fields 11, 13, 16, and 17. **Grey Squirrels** are active in Burley Woods, 5 seen separately in early April, and have also been reported from Pickworth Woods, Hambleton and at Normanton where they were stealing nuts from the bird feeder.

At Exton Park **Roe Deer** have been seen on five occasions during March and April, flushed from Tunnely and Westland Woods. Nearby at Greetham Valley Golf Club, a roe deer was seen at the end of March. **Muntjac** hoof prints are evidence of their presence over much of the Egleton reserve, where they are occasionally seen, skulking through cover. One was heard barking at Clipsham Park Wood, and prints were found at Prior's Coppice. A Muntjac was seen in a scrub area of Burley Wood, and one crossed a pathway 10 m in front of the observer in North Glade of Ketton Quarry. Following much culling of **Fallow Deer** numbers are still low, mainly seen in ones and twos, but a group of 7 was seen in Tunnely Wood, and 12 in Pickworth Wood. Other reports are from Walk Farm, Fort Henry, Burley Woods, Clipsham Park Wood, and a dead one was found on Verge 7 between Pickworth and Great Casterton, head removed.

but around Easter next year, remember to look for 'dark honeycombs' fixed to chunky low stalks (*M esculenta*) or looking like the rubbers on top of white pencils (the Semifree, whose honeycomb does not quite touch the stalk). They are strikingly

different from fungi with gills and caps!

I was not expecting to see my tarmac- and moss-loving *Arrhenia rickenii* this spring, after they showed so well in winter, but just one did emerge on 8th April after heavy rain. Nice.

Many thanks to B and D Parker and T Caldicott.

Amphibians in the cellar of The Stone House in Wing

by Dr Charles Gallimore, RNHS Amphibian and Reptile Recorder

Amphibians have been seen on many occasions in the cellar of the Society's Amphibian and Reptile Recorder in Wing since 1990. Records have been kept, but not always as detailed as might have been desirable.

The first record was on Christmas Eve in 1990, when a dead mummified frog was found. The next record was not until August 1994 when a live and active smooth newt was found. In January 1995, when collecting a box of jam jars that had been stored in the cellar, I came across several mummified amphibians (three frogs and four smooth newts) in the jars. It was at this point that I realised that amphibians might be using the cellar more than I knew. Superficially there was no obvious easy access or egress for amphibians and I was perplexed and surprised that they were using the cellar.

It might be helpful to describe the cellar, its history and the known history of amphibians round The Stone House. The cellar is below ground-level in the oldest part of the house – between two and three hundred years old. The wall of this part of the house is 2½ foot thick, made of stone and filled with rubble. The cellar is 9 foot by 10 foot with a ceiling height of just over 6 foot. There is a window on the western aspect, which opens into a pit. The window is 2½ by 2½ foot square divided by a mullion. One half is glazed and the other half is glazed at the bottom half and has a fine metal mesh in the top half. There is a Heath Robinson plastic flap over the mesh, which can be incompletely closed during the winter, but which is usually half open. The sill of the window is uncovered and a few ferns have appeared between the flat stones over the past 10 or 15 years. The floor comprises large stone flags and there is an elevated brick plinth on two sides. The temperature is fairly constant at about 10-16 °C and the cellar is comfortably humid. The cellar is used for storage, principally wine in wine-racks, on the four walls. This estate-agent speak is necessary to understand the desirability

of the cellar for amphibians.

I have lived in The Stone House since 1976. All four species of amphibian that occur in Rutland have been recorded in the garden in that time. I first recorded frogs in 1980, when the first of a number of ponds was dug, and they bred in most years until 2009. Initially the frog population thrived and 10-30 clumps of spawn were laid in most years until 1991, since when spawn has been in single figures apart from 1995 and since 2009 there has been no spawning. The decline may be due to the rising newt population or perhaps predation by mallard and moorhens, or some other factors.

Toads had been first seen in 1978 and they are seen every year, although they have never bred as far as I am aware.

Smooth newts arrived in 1981 (or were first seen then) and they have remained in abundance ever since. Torchlight counts revealed populations of about 40 for the first 25 years, (reaching 105 in 1987), after which numbers have dropped a little but they are still common.

Great crested newts did not arrive until 1987 although they too are now common and successful breeders in the ponds. However, although a crested newt was first seen in 1987, and a single individual was seen annually, it was not until 1993 that two were seen and the population did not really take off until 1996 when 16 were counted. Between 20-70 were counted annually (with a peak of 108 in 2001), until 2009 when the numbers dropped to the teens.

The only other herp that occurs is the grass snake, which is seen in most years, and has bred in some years in my compost heaps, but seems to prefer my neighbours' heaps. They have never been found in the cellar, but have been seen in close proximity on the back door step and by the wall.

Although frogs were the trail-blazers in cellar use in 1990, they have only been recorded on six occasions and on three of these occasions dead

mummified frogs were found and on a fourth occasion the frog was moribund. Only two healthy frogs have been found, both in 1998.

Smooth newts were first detected in the cellar in August 1994 when a healthy female was found. In January the following year four mummified newts were found in jam jars, at which time the penny dropped that a significant number of newts were using the cellar. All jars were inverted. A live juvenile was found a fortnight later confirming that the cellar was still accessible and popular with amphibians. At this time I remained puzzled by their mode of entry and this did not become clear until a few years later. A single smooth newt was seen in the following January and it was two years before the next one was seen. However in the winter of 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 I saw them more frequently and not just singles but as many as eight in March 1999. 1999 and 2000 were the best years for spelean smooth newts, when some were seen in almost every month. After that they became scarcer and only 8 were seen after 2001.

Great crested newts discovered the cellar (or I discovered them in the cellar) in 1995. Over the next three years I saw them 2-4 times per year. However in 1999 they took up residence in earnest. They were seen in nine months with a maximum of 3 on three occasions. In 2000 they were present in every month apart from December with 5 being counted on three occasions. 2001 was another good year with newts being seen in eight months but with maxima of only 2. In subsequent years they were seen on a few occasions in most years, the largest number being 5 in 2013. At least one great crested newt has been seen in each year since they first appeared in the cellar apart from 2007, 2009 and 2010. The great crested newt has revealed the mode of entry into the cellar. I have observed them emerging through small gaps between the stones in the window sill, and also there are three small newt-sized holes at the base of the plaster where they have also been seen emerging or retreating.

Toads have never been found in the cellar, although they have made their way into the kitchen on at least two occasions. Nor have grass snakes been found in the cellar.

A total of 79 smooth newts have been observed during this period, of which 5 have been dead. They have been observed on 47 different occasions as often more than one has been seen. It is probably more meaningful to note that they have been seen in a total of 30 separate months (out of 240) since 1994. They have most frequently been encountered in January, February and March

(four times each) and only once each in June, September and December, but I am not sure that this is at all significant. The maximum seen on any one occasion was 8 in 1999. If the minimum number seen in any one year is assumed to be the maximum on any one occasion plus any obviously different individuals seen at other times, then a minimum of 37 different smooth newts have been seen in twenty years. However, I am not certain whether the newts seen in the cellar are the same ones seen time and time again or different ones. Obviously sometimes their size or sex makes it clear that they are different individuals. It also assumes that they return to ponds to breed and different individuals are involved each year, possibly not a valid assumption.

A total of 130 great crested newts have been observed, only one of which was dead. They have been observed on 79 occasions in 50 different months. The monthly frequency differs from that of smooth newt. May and December are the most frequent months in which they have been encountered. The maximum seen on any one occasion was 5 in 2000 and again in 2013. Interestingly the minimum number of great crested newts in twenty years is also 37, although the assumption that the immatures return to ponds to breed is not valid as they take some years to mature. However not very many immatures are involved.

There does not seem to be any obvious reason for this chronological distribution. September is the month with fewest sightings, when one might have expected more sightings as they might be seeking somewhere to hibernate. On the other hand they are not actually hibernating in the cellar and are probably feeding on the odd beetle and other invertebrates. Of course, this is a retrospective study and newts may well have been overlooked. Also they do not usually appear in the open during daylight and I can not actually remember seeing one in daylight. This would obviously skew the sightings to winter evenings, and this might be the explanation of the apparent paucity of summer sightings. Immature newts of both species have been seen in almost all months so there does not seem to be any preferred time of year for them.

There is also no obvious correlation between the numbers seen in the cellar and the numbers counted in the pond, except in that great crested newts did not appear in the cellar until six years after their first pond appearance. Bumper years for smooth newts in the cellar (1999 and 2000) were average pond years. The bumper pond

years for great crested newts (2001-2003) actually followed the best years for cellar newts.

As all these observations have been made opportunistically and not in a systematic way it is hard to draw any meaningful conclusions, and numbers quoted should be taken with a certain amount of salt. Newt counts in my garden have been done by torchlight, which is probably quite accurate for great crested newts, but less

so for smooth newts when daylight counts can sometimes yield a higher count. Visibility for counting can be adversely affected by vegetation, and water turbidity following mallard visits. I have been more diligent in counting in some years than in others. Similarly, cellar counts are open to wide misinterpretation due to the fact that prior to 1990 I did not look for amphibians in the cellar.

A walk in a Rutland wood by Phil Rudkin, RNHS Orthoptera Recorder

I entered the wood via the small gateway, off the main road. Wandering up the ride, the bluebells were beginning to be gradually engulfed by vegetation, but a few clumps still stood out. The songs of Garden Warblers joined in with the Blackcaps and Willow Warblers, a few Peacocks and Green-veined Whites appeared on the wing, plus a pair of Brimstones. The song of the Cuckoo (previously heard on the 27th April) provided a backcloth to the scene.

Reaching the main ride, I headed west, towards the Oakham end of the wood. What followed provided a most unexpected, exciting and rewarding two hours. It was now 1.0 pm, and I had reached the edge of the ride. At this junction I stopped and looked for a good clump of bluebells. Suddenly, a few yards away, a movement in the thick grasses of the ride caught my attention; there was the back end of a small deer, it gradually turned round and looked at my still outline for a few moments. We looked at each other; then, it realised that I should not be there, and slowly and casually cantered away into the bushes. I was thrilled to have come 'face to face' with a stunning looking **Roe Deer buck**. Amazing! This was my first Rutland Roe Deer, and I think the first sighting for this wood.

After that gratifying 'confrontation' I then made for the bluebell patch further along the next ride; it was now 1.30 pm. Fantastic, what did I hear? The amazing deep-throated calls of **Ravens**, from well within the tree cover. Clive and I had observed Ravens in this area on 27th April. What followed was a remarkable one hour and 50 minutes of pure Raven vocabulary (from two adults birds), and stunning observations of their behaviour near the nest site.

The activity happened at intervals of approximately 10 minutes. I set up my sound recording gear, and manoeuvred quietly a short distance into the tree canopy. One adult perched in a tree, and constantly called, which

was answered by a young bird (obviously in the nest nearby). I began to record these interesting sounds. Then another adult appeared overhead, and gave a few short calls to its mate. It carried on circling around, and gave excellent views of its shape. The young bird answered with a one call note. Next, both adults would take off and fly around the site together, giving excited calls. Finally, they would settle down, and all was quiet. This procedure was then repeated several times (with a few small variations in calls and movement). It gave me time to give my arm and wrist a welcome rest. (I was using my 20 inch parabolic reflector, hand held. I only use a tripod if the subject is stationary.) During one of these short breaks I edged further into the wood, towards where the young bird was calling. Eventually, I could see the nest, situated near the top of a thin, tall old-looking conifer. Yes, I had guessed correctly, just one young bird in there, well grown, and I think about ready to fledge. At one point the pair landed in a nearby tree, and communicated with each other; most fascinating sounds indeed!

During this entertaining and important observation of their activities, I moved steadily towards the nest site. They spotted me, but apart from a few anxious notes, they seemed to accept my presence, and carried on with the sequences. At 3.20 pm I decided to leave them to their endeavours. I inserted some short narratives in between the serious stuff of recording their vocabulary. My final words were of appreciation to the pair for allowing me to share a part of their life here in the woods, and it was a privilege, thank you *Corvus corax*.

Footnote: It is scientifically documented that the **Corvidae** are the most intelligent of the world's bird families. Ravens in particular are also very playful, and at times when this pair took off together and circled around over their territory, they were indeed enjoying each other's company.