

RNHS. Newsletter. 2020 August

We hope you all enjoyed the latest edition of Fieldfare. Many thanks to Carolyn Baxter and Sophie Widdowson for producing a fantastic edition.

It has been decided that from now on Fieldfare will be published 5 times a year which means that each edition will have less content but the quality will remain unchanged.

In addition to Fieldfare this newsletter has a slightly different content than Fieldfare in an attempt at a more chatty informal style. We always welcome little snippets of information from any members.

Particularly important if one has had to shield and human contact has been at a minimum it would be good to hear how you have been spending your time, what books you have been reading music you have been listening to or television programmes you can recommend - even better if these are related to anything in the natural world.

Attention all Members #1.

Linda Biddle your Chairman has been sitting around waiting with great excitement and anticipation for the postman to stagger up to her letterbox with a sackful of entires for the Garden Challenge. Unfortunately something has gone terribly amiss and so far only a handful have been received. Poor Linda.

Anything noted that's alive in around under or over your garden from March to the end of June counts. (I've counted woodlice and worms, actually I forgot to add the worms, bother) Prize yet to be decided - that's surely worth the time it takes to jot down a few species.

Oh, e - mail entries also accepted !
abiddle21@talktalk.net.



Linda Biddle, Mammal recorder, received this wonderful article from Marion Markham written for part of the Annual Review. It's lovely to be able to share Marion's sightings in this way, one can feel the wonder and excitement of viewing the nights recording. Thank you Marion.

Trailcam Tails of Langham 2019 - RNHS

On New Year's day evening a healthy female fox with a distinctive bushy tail with big white tip visited to nibble on dog biscuits. She continued to visit almost nightly through January to April, with a male fox with dark tail visiting occasionally singly. They both appeared together on the 2nd February which was the only time the trailcam recorded two together all year. A third fox made an

occasional visit during February, distinguished by a kink at the top of its tail. The female was the only fox visiting during May to August although visits becoming less frequent. By September the female and the fox with the kinked tail were both making regular appearances, which continued through to December. In November and December the male fox with the dark tail was back visiting again a few times.

During the times when the hedgehog and fox were present together the situation was amicable, ie. no one was tried to be eaten! On 1st March the female fox was recorded carrying a woodpigeon though!



A Muntjac with fawn were recorded regularly during January and February, nibbling on fruit tree leaves. They were recorded together again on 23rd March with the adult seen in daylight the next day. They were again recorded regularly together during April. A male Muntjac was recorded twice in June and one on 11th September.

The first hedgehog record for the year was on 19th February with a further nine appearances that month; a single animal usually in the small hours of the morning between midnight and 3am. Visits increased during March to June with one or two present most nights. On 16th May there were three hedgehogs present together. By July, some hedgehogs were showing territorial behaviour, with one being shoved by another. A rolled up hedgehog can be shoved quite a long way! A variety of sizes of hedgehog were present by July with one half the size of the others – this year's young. Hedgehogs continued to appear on the trailcam regularly until December.

A late September brood was seen on 21st September with the female emerging at 1pm to feed on fat nibbles and sunflower seeds near the hedgehog nesting box. She was accompanied by four small young. Food was placed out for the family for the next couple of months in the hope of them gaining enough weight for hibernation. On 23rd October one youngster was recorded passing the trailcam with a mouth full of leaves, planning ahead for winter! Some of the youngsters continued to use the hedgehog nesting box under the hedge. One was seen wandering in daylight on 3rd November. It was put on the kitchen scales and weighed in at a mere 350 grams, not enough for hibernation. On 9th November a different youngster seen at 11am wandering in the garden was weighed, this one was 260 grams. It was taken straight to Oakham Vets to be taken into their

excellent care for the winter. By 13th November a second youngster was also in trouble. It was found curled up in the open, cold and the ticks crawling away!. This one weighed 300 grams and so was also taken to Oakham Vets for care. The remaining two youngsters were regularly recorded on the trailcam throughout December, along with the occasional adult.

A brown rat was recorded on the trailcam for the first time on 19th September. It was recorded three times that month. By October it was a regular visitor which continued through to the end of the year.

The supporting cast by day was Grey Squirrel and by evening wood mouse. A Common Shrew was disturbed in the garden shed on 30th January. Bank voles were recorded in July and December.

Attention all Members #2. VERY IMPORTANT.

Orders for calendars.

As you all know due to the Covid crisis we are unable to hold indoor meetings which is a great shame as people miss out yet again on chatting with like minded people. Normally the next years calendar can be perused and bought at these meetings.

This year we are unable to show members the calendar and consequently we have no idea how many we should print or if it's even feasible to do so. So we really need to get an idea of how many people would like to buy one. We obviously won't know the price of the calendar until we know the numbers so the more the merrier.

If the price is too high we won't print them, however Peter Scott will put the calendar on the website.

Please contact e mail, phone or snail mail any of the committe members but especially Margaret Conner: mjconner100@gmail.com

Or

Peter Scott: peter.scott27@btopenworld.com

Now for our Member of the month - introducing Mr Phil Rudkin. I first met Phil when I went on a walk organised by the Society to Priors Coppice. So welcoming, friendly and most importantly, not intimidating with his knowledge. I hope to learn more and more from Phil not least how to infect people with his enthusiasm. Thank you Phil.



How did I get in to all things natural? A short autobiography: by Phil Rudkin

An unusual title: because that is exactly the request I received recently from Carolyn Baxter. I am delighted to be asked, so here goes!

Starting at the beginning:

In the 1940s, Stamford, was a small market town, and I lived in the Northfields area, just on the edge of the town. From my bedroom window, I could watch the tractors working on the arable fields, approx. 100 yards away. At about seven years old, us youngsters would play in Worcester Crescent green; and then (in the summer), I remember us going through the hedge, and in to the wheat crops; laying on my back in the sun, listening to the Skylarks.

During this era, the most popular pastime for a few of us, was timing the age of the Jackdaw young (in the darkness of their nest holes), and just before fledging, we would take one or two out of the nest, and look after them as pets. They were great fun, and immediately imprinted themselves on us, as their parents!

At about the age of 12, I was given two Dutch Rabbits; I had them for a few years, and took them to shows, and eventually used a friend's male to mate with my female: the resulting breeding was a success!

I have written the above chapter, to demonstrate my earlier feelings for wildlife, and the countryside.

There now comes a big break: from leaving school at 15 years of age, to the present day. I left school in July 1951: and immediately joined Stamford YMCA (a wonderful youth club), in St. Peter's Street. The next 5 years at this club satisfied my passion for football, table tennis and jazz. We were like a big family.

The next stage is so important: In March 1958 to March 1960, I did my National Service. This 2 years has always acted as a land-mark in my life: As an adult: Meeting my wife Angela, from Wing village, in December 1960, and getting married in June 1963. I spent much time investigating the Rutland countryside, and this started a new era for me; and is where my latent passion for nature was re-kindled.

In 1963, I joined the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology), and took part in the early bird surveys. The final piece in the jigsaw was completed in February 1966.

Stamford library in those days incorporated a small wildlife museum, and the Curator was Mr. Lawrence Tebbutt. One day I wandered in to the library, and was fascinated by the cabinets of stuffed birds. The Curator spotted me, and came up to ask me if I was interested in ornithology, and of course I was. He told me that a new Wildlife Society was being set up in Oakham, Rutland, and he urged me to go to Ketton, to contact an elderly ornithologist, and committee member, Mrs. Jean Green. On the following Sunday, I wandered in to her large garden, and met the lady. She took my subscription; and enrolled me in to the newly formed Rutland Natural History Society. A month later, one evening, I drove over to Oakham, and entered the Catmose Village College School building; where a packed audience were attending the AGM. After the business meeting, we all settled down to watch a "mind boggling", pioneering, superb black and white film of "The Woodpeckers of the Black Forest", by Heinz Sielmann.

I was ecstatic at the wonderful feeling that was around the hall. My new Journey had begun!

The RNHS has been a massive part of my life from that day: and I list the following attainments:
Elected to the committee, March 1967.

Attended my first Dawn Chorus, May 1967. From 1969 to 1989, leader of the annual Dawn Chorus surveys: Compiled results, for the Annual Reports.

1973, purchased first tape recorder; to record the sounds of the wild.

1976, joined the Wildlife Sound Recording Society. Won my first award, for the Documentary, (yes, you have guessed it)! Title: Woodpeckers. Eventually, won International awards.

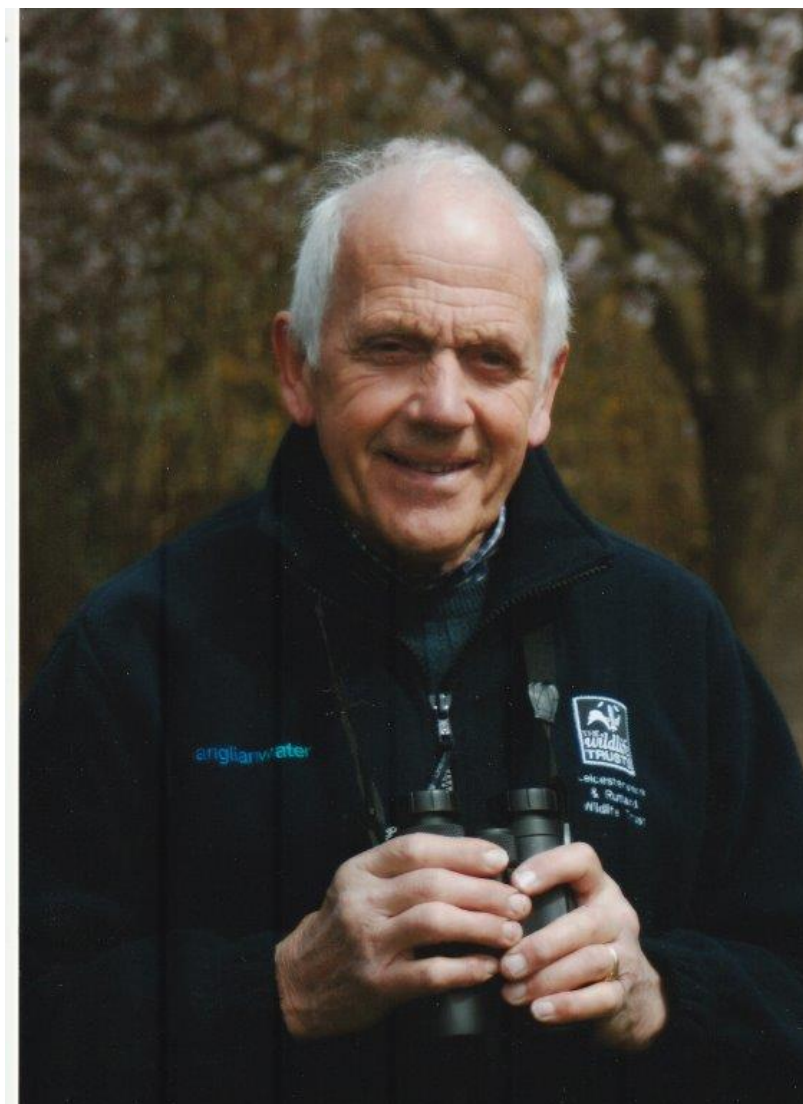
1982. Employed (part time), as Bird-Song Tutor, for the W.E.A. Rutland Branch.

During this period, I ran one day courses, for the Leicester branch, and a weekend course, for Northampton CC.

2001. Joined the Rutland Water Wildlife Recorders' Group. This followed with the role of Rutland County Recorder for the Orthoptera in 2007.

Finally, my dream: Elected Chairman of Rutland Natural History Society at the AGM March 1985; retiring in March 1995, at the AGM. A wonderful experience: and never to be forgotten! Met so many super people, and brilliant naturalists. One big happy family!

Philip Rudkin. 18 August 2020.





John Rogers wrote the piece below back in May for the newsletter and I apologise for not having included it before now. I found it very useful and it's gratifying to know that even the experts have trouble with grass ID.

Some thoughts on learning to identify plants and grasses

When the lock-down began and I wondered what I was going to do, I thought it would be a good idea to try and learn to identify grasses (just grasses, not sedges and rushes too- one thing at once) I'd had a go at this once or twice, but not with much success. I didn't find it very easy this time either, so it was a relief when the restrictions changed and I could go out and collect some grasses. Seeing them in situ and being able to bring a few home to pour over helps a great deal. I now think I can possibly identify two species, and have a stab at another three or four, so there are about another 35 common species to go!

As well as using what books I had, I searched the internet and I thought it might be useful for colleagues if I jotted down what sources I had discovered, not just for grasses, but other flowering plants too. I started with a Field Studies Council leaflet on Common Grasses which is good. It has a good key which is probably indispensable, but like all keys can be confusing when you can't decide what you are looking at is one thing or another. I have a copy of Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland by M Blamey and the Fitters R and A, which has a section on grasses and I found a very helpful video and then a Grasses Crib Sheet from the Species Recovery Trust.

A very good place to start searching for ID help is the site of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland www.bsbi.org. Pick the link on the home page for [beginner](#) and then the link, again [beginners](#), under Botanical Keys and on-line resources. This will take you to many different links, some very simple and useful others for the knowledgeable botanist, which are beyond me. Plant Crib and Species Accounts fall into the latter category though they are still worth a look at. I have downloaded sheets on Buttercups, Speedwells and Violas from the beginners page. There are a lot of interesting photographs and comment at [#wildflowerhour](#) which is updated every Sunday. It is worth a browse.

Naturespot has a whole series of photographs on individual species, all taken in Leicestershire and Rutland, in the Species Galleries section. Don't forget that if you sign up to Naturespot, you can send in photographs and ask for the species to be identified. This can be useful and reassuring (if you've got it right)

The Species Recovery Trust have some useful information and a number of videos. Including the one on Grasses. They also produce one or two guides or cribs which look useful. www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.

The National Plant Monitoring Scheme created by a number of interested organisations has some useful information as a by product of its main purpose of encouraging the systematic monitoring of various habitats across Britain. The guides are designed to aid the people taking part in the surveys but contain useful information. www.npms.org.uk

countrysideinfo.co.uk covers all wildlife and conservation. There are some pages on grasses and on plants.

floralimages.co.uk Lots of pictures of UK plants searchable by colour or name

wildflowerfinder.org.uk has lots of photographs and a variety of ways of finding them

ukwildflowers.com has photographs but not much description

british-wild-flowers.co.uk is just photographs

thewildflowersociety.com under "articles" on the home page has guides to a number of species

Attention all Members #3.

Photos for calendar competition.

Deadline - 31st August.

3 entries per person with caption/
description date and place.

High resolution photos please.

Landscape format.

Content. landscape or wildlife in
Rutland or outside, providing it can be
found in the county.

In the remaining days to before the
deadline, take a quick look through the
photos you've taken and give it a go.
Good luck.



Baby Pipistrelle sp. Returned to a
house roost in Lyddington July 2020

Virtual Birdfair.

Now on line, all lectures free but donations gladly accepted. Just go to <http://virtualbirdfair.org.uk/> Pick a lecture /event from the menu on the home page. I've listened to 2 discussions already which have been very informative and thought provoking. If you miss the time and day these talks will be available to view on line for three months so plenty of time to catch up. Some excellent talks and 'events' in the line up.

Finally a big thank you to everyone who has updated their contact details. Doing so makes life a lot easier for those who have to deal with communication.

