



Close-up of a female Holy Blue. Photo, D Cotter

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The spring this year has been one of contrasts, unseasonably warm weather followed by some very cold weeks, inhospitable and unwelcoming to our summer migrants. However, spring it now definitely is – birds in full song, and flowers blossoming – late violets as well as early champions, Holly Blue and Speckled Wood butterflies on the wing. Enjoy it while you can – it passes so quickly, and the bright green spring leaves soon become full blown, spring flowers are soon over.

There has been lots of activity going on in the Society too. As well as the usual programme, Eyebrook, walks in the woods, Dawn Chorus, and Glaphorn Cow Pastures, your committee represented the RNHS on a stand at Stamford Library, generating a lot of interest, so huge thanks to those involved.

A big event is planned for 20th July. We are holding our first open Family Wildlife and Bug Hunt at Ketton Quarry. Details on page 4 but do put the date in your diary now – bring along your children and grandchildren, and invite neighbours. Please collect suitable bug containers and bring them along. We shall no doubt need lots of assistance, so volunteers will be welcome!

Also in July we are holding a joint Recorder's meeting with Rutland Water Recorders. Sue Timms of the Leics and Rutland Environmental Records Centre is coming to update us on the latest developments for recording our wildlife.

Sadly this is the final edition of *Fieldfare* to be edited and produced by Hendrina Ellis. I know you will all wish to join me in thanking her most sincerely for the

amazing job she has done for the last 12 years. *Fieldfare* has become a much respected symbol of what we, the RNHS members, try to do, promoting knowledge and understanding of our local wildlife and attempting to provide evidence for its protection. Hendrina has done so much to develop our newsletter, and we are truly grateful for all her mammoth efforts!

Richard and Linda Brown have taken on the task for the next edition, due out in **August**, as agreed at the AGM (Recorders please note!). I thank them on your behalf, and hope they find the task not too arduous, and I'm sure that they will be helped and supported by all of you.

Linda Biddle, RNHS Chair

Remember – RNHS 2020 Calendar and competition

DEADLINE August 31!

See March *Fieldfare* page 2 for rules, or the RNHS website.
Please send your photographs to me at peter.scott27@btopenworld.com.

Uppingham Sports and Books, 9 High St East, Uppingham, LE15 9PY

Having spoken to Terry, he has confirmed with Uppingham Bookshop that they still offer the 10% discount to RNHS members (take your membership card).

Peter Scott, Website Editor

DON'T MISS THESE EXTRA SUMMER EVENTS!

RNHS extra event

Family wildlife and bug hunt, Ketton Quarry, July 20

For children, parents and grandparents! Ketton Quarry SSSI is an excellent place to look for lots of wildlife and to explore. We will be using the Scout Hut as a base. See Diary Dates page 4 for details.

VTC events to which RNHS members are invited

The VTC is the Volunteer Training Centre on the Hambledon Peninsula - head towards Hambledon village, look out for sign to the VTC on the righthand side. Award-winning building, great views across lagoons from 1st floor.

Where Next for Curlews? – A talk by Mary Colwell – Friday 7th June, 7pm

Curlews are in serious trouble, in some places they have declined by over 90% and on average 60% across England. There are many huge pressures against them, so is it possible for our largest wading bird to have a future in Britain? Mary Colwell is a writer and producer. In 2016 she walked 500 miles across the UK to find out what was happening to curlews. Her book *Curlew Moon* was published in April 2018.

We are asking for a £2 donation to cover the cost of refreshments.

Irreplaceable – A Talk by Julian Hoffman – Tuesday 23rd July, 7pm

All across the world, irreplaceable habitats are under threat. Unique ecosystems of plants and animals are being destroyed by human intervention. From the tiny to the vast, from marshland to meadow, and from Kent to Glasgow to India to America, they are disappearing. Join author Julian Hoffman for a talk to accompany his latest book *Irreplaceable* where he discusses these habitats and how to save them.

We are asking for a £2 donation to cover the cost of refreshments.

Back from the Brink

Back from the Brink is one of the most ambitious conservation projects ever undertaken. Its aim – to save 20 species from extinction and benefit over 200 more through 19 projects that span England; from the tip of Cornwall to Northumberland. Many conservation organisations have come together with one focus in mind – to bring back from the brink of extinction some of England's most threatened species of animal, plant and fungi. Explore the diverse projects. If you haven't met this organization before, by taking a look at its website <https://naturebftb.co.uk/>.

Wednesday 10 July, 3.30-11pm **Bat survey training**

An opportunity to take part in some bat monitoring in the Rockingham Forest area to identify and quantify the species that are present and gather data for our target bat species, the Barbastelle bat. Attendees will be trained on how to use bat detecting equipment, plan a transect route, identify barbastelle in the field and carry out a transect survey in the evening. Once trained, all attendees will have all the necessary skills to monitor other sites throughout Rockingham Forest.

To be held at Marholm Village Hall PE6 7JA and Castor Hanglands NNR. No previous bat surveying skills needed. All equipment will be provided. Free event but booking required. Contact Liz Morrison at rootsofrockingham@butterfly-conservation.org or on 01780 444067 to book your place or for more information.

Sunday 14 July, 10.30 am-1 pm **Butterflies of Fineshade**

Join Butterfly Conservation to discover some of the butterflies that can be found at this fabulous site. Last year we saw 23 species on our walk, so we'll be looking to see if we can beat that this year! Species we'll be hoping to see include Silver-washed Fritillary, White-letter Hairstreak, White Admiral, Purple Hairstreak and Dark Green Fritillary. Meet in the courtyard of Top Lodge, Findshade, Grid ref: SP981983

Free event, but car parking £4.

More events to be announced, look out for them on this website:
naturebftb.co.uk/events/#roots-of-rockingham

DIARY DATES

RNHS FIELD TRIPS

Full details of all these events appear on our website at www.rnhs.org.uk. If the weather is bad, check the website or call the 'Queries' phone number for changes.

Tuesday 18 June, 11 am

Grantham Canal

Leaders Claire Install, LRWT Conservation Officer, and Linda Biddle. Meet at Dove cottage tea rooms (Canal Lane, Stathern). (Map ref: SK755324, postcode LE14 4EX). Walk, and lunch available at the tearoom.

Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108; abiddle21@talktalk.net

Sunday 23 June, 10 am

Holwell Nature Reserves

Leader John Bristow, LRWT Conservation Officer and RNHS Committee. Old quarries and grassland, north of Melton Mowbray. Meet at SK74157 23575 by the grass triangle.

Queries: John Bristow, 07975660656, jbristow@lrwt.org.uk

Saturday July 13, 10 am

King's Dyke Nature Reserve

Leader Peter Scott, following on from a RNHS talk by Philip Parker on March 5. This old Peterborough brickpit has been redeveloped into a nature reserve (Map ref: TL245972). Park in the marked out bays on the lefthand side of the car park as you enter. Please take membership cards; there is no charge.

Queries: Peter Scott, 07535 508932, peter.scott27@bopenworld.com

Sat July 20, 11-12.30, 1.30-3

Family Wildlife and Bug hunt, Ketton Quarry

Activities for children, parents and grandparents at Ketton Scout Hut, Pit lane Ketton. There will be two sessions. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Drinks available at the Scout Hut. Bring bug boxes! Bring a picnic! Cost £3.00 per child per session. Volunteer helpers needed.

For booking contact Linda Biddle, 01780 762108; abiddle21@talktalk.net

Saturday 10 August, 10 am

Swaddywell Pit (Langdyke Countryside Trust)

Leader Dave Cotter. The Swaddywell Pit (at Stamford Stone Co.) is on the road between Ufford and Marholm. Overflow parking in Willowbrook Farm Shop.

Queries: Dave Cotter, 07887392308, davidcotter1745@gmail.com

Sunday 1 September, 10.30 am

Plant galls at Burley Wood with the BPGS

Leader Roy Lemmon, RNHS Plant Gall Recorder, and members of the British Plant Gall Society (BPGS), who will identify and explain intriguing plant galls in a new site (to the BPGS) (Map ref: SK892093).

Queries: Roy Lemmon, 01780 762051, roy.lemmon@yahoo.co.uk

RNHS EVENING MEETINGS

Indoor meetings are held at Rutland Community Hub (VAR), Lands End Way, Oakham LE15 6RB. Tea and coffee, free. Visitors are asked for a donation of £2. The next indoor meeting is on October 1, with Matt Shardlow of Buglife.

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST, RUTLAND GROUP

For events in Leicestershire and Rutland see www.lrwt.org.uk or phone 0116 262 9968. Rutland group meetings are held at the Volunteer Training Centre (VTC), Hambleton Road, LE15 8AD. Entry £1. There is an amazing array of events of various sorts, see the website and allow time for web-browsing.

Sunday 30 June, 2 pm

Stonesby Quarry NR

Guided walk led by John Bristow, LRWT Conservation Officer (and RNHS committee). Grid ref: SK810253, nearest post code LE144AB, situated east of Waltham on the wolds.

LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST, BOURNE GROUP

For details of all LWT events, see www.lincstrust.org.uk, or phone 01507 526677 in office hours. Bourne group indoor meetings are held at the Methodist Church Hall, Bourne. You don't need to be a member to join in our activities.

WEATHER

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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March 2019

Atmospheric pressure and wind This month came in like a lion and went out like a lamb. Pressures in the first 17 days were low and winds were both variable in direction and frequently high in velocity. The lowest pressure I recorded was 988.5 mb at 09.00 on the 7th, and there were three named storms, Freya on 3rd-4th, Gareth on 12th-14th and Hannah (Met Office) on the 16th; and it was in this latter storm that I recorded the highest gust up to 36 mph at 09.00.

The second period, 18-24th, had high pressures. The highest was 1037 mb on the 28th. Generally there were low wind speeds, with directions predominantly W-N.

Temperature This was a warm March; the mean temperature, 8.54 °C, was second (in the decade 2010-2019) to March 2017, which was in itself an exceptionally warm month at 9.08 °C. There was just one frost, -0.5 °C on the 30-31. The highest daytime maximum was 17.9 °C on the 30th, which was exceeded by 18.8 °C on 31.03.14, and by 19.2 °C on 31.03.11.

Rain A wetter month than January and February with a total here of 53.7 mm (2.1 inches) which is 135% of my long-term mean of 29 years. All fell in the stormy period referred to above, i.e. the first 17 days of the month. 2019 has been a dry year so far, rainfall for the first 3 months is 81.5% of LTM, but of course no prediction for the rest of the year can be made from this.

April 2019

Atmospheric pressure and wind In the first 8 days of the month pressures were low, then high until the 22nd when they dropped until the 29th and 30th. Winds were mainly NE-E until Storm Hannah (Met Eirann) on the 27th, when they were S-SW and this gave gusts of up to 27 mph at 09.00.

Temperature There are some disparate figures for this month, the mean maximum, 16.57 °C, was first in the decade 2010-2019, but the mean minimum, 3.13 °C, was 9th in the same period due to five air frosts, the lowest being -2.9 °C on the 12th-13th. As a result the overall mean was 9.82 °C, sixth in the decade. The highest daytime maximum that I recorded was 26.1 °C on the 22nd.

Rain A total here of 9.4 mm (0.37 inches), 50% of which fell on the 1st of the month and the rest between 24th-27th inclusive. This latter included Storm Hannah which produced only 1 mm.

Thus far 2019 has been a dry year, the expected rainfall January-April inclusive is 167.5 mm and the actual rainfall for the same period has been 110.8 mm, a shortfall of 56.7 mm or 2.2 inches, i.e. we have had 66% of the expected rainfall so far this year.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES **RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore**

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March/April 2019

This is a very sparse report for these two months, which are usually full of records.

Frog-spawning records were few and some regular breeding sites were either abandoned or the quantity of spawn was seriously reduced in amount. A mere seven sites of spawning were reported, although there were a couple of records from areas where they very probably had bred. A few of the ponds at Rutland Water Nature Reserve were examined but few newts were found.

After the early frog-spawning in Barrowden in February, apart from spawning in Stamford on March 3rd, the next report of spawn was on March 16th at Exton, where it was found at three sites. Later in the month it was reported from Langham and Wing. At Rutland Water Nature Reserve a mere eleven clumps were present at a site where last year there were over eighty clumps.

Common Toads were first seen at Exton on March 16th, where they were spawning, and there were reports from Ketton and Stamford Quarries, Leighfield and Rutland Water Nature Reserve.

Smooth Newts were found in one pond in Rutland Water Nature Reserve and in a garden in Langham. There were no records of Great Crested Newts. (Visiting mallards have totally opacified my garden pond where usually newts of both species are to be found.)

A **Viviparous Lizard** was seen at Ketton Quarry by Dave Needham on April 19th. He also saw a **Grass Snake** there on April 21st and an **Adder** on March 29th.

My thanks to the following who sent records: T P Appleton, T Caldicott, L Clarke, A W Ellis, A Hill, R Lemmon, M Markham, T Mitcham and D Needham.

BIRDS

RECORDER Terry Mitcham

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March/April 2019

An interesting two months saw wildfowl numbers declining, with other winter visitors also heading back to Europe, although there were late records of **Bramblings**, and **Fieldfares** were noted to the end of April. Summer visitors arrived – hirundines and warblers, with a good passage of waders at Rutland Water in April, with Eggleton Reserve providing the main muddy refuelling area. Eggleton also attracted **Little Gulls** and terns. Rutland Water's **Ospreys** provided great interest with good numbers returning in March. Rarer species included the **American Wigeon**, a **Spoonbill**, and a **Kittiwake** and a **Bearded Tit** at Rutland Water.

My thanks to the following for their records: D & J Ball, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, Dr C H Gallimore, B Galpin, M & G Griffin, P Langston, LROS, R Lemmon, S Lister, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, B Moore, D Needham, M Nourish, L Park, P Rudkin, RWNR, P Scott.

See also Wildfowl Counts on page 9.

Whooper Swan	21 were in RWNA on 10.04.
Pink-footed Goose	Three were at RWEg1 on 02.04, with four on 09 and 12.04 and 27.04.
Shelduck	Present at FHP throughout both months with three pairs on 23.04.
Mandarin Duck	A pair were regular at RWNorm from early March and five were in Ext Park on 11.03. Noted at Martinsthorpe on 02.04, with a pair near Wg on 20.04.
American Wigeon	Noted at RWEg from 15.03, intermittently to 31.03, and then on 12.04.
Teal	There was a high count of 71 at FHP on 09.03.
Scaup	Present at RW to the end of March with a max of six on 02.03. A male was in RWSA on 07.04 and a female was in BFP on 25.04.
Smew	All March records came from RWEg, with birds present to 28.03 and a max of fourteen on 17.03 and 20.03.
Ruddy Duck	A female was at RWEg1 on 27.04.
Grey Partridge	One was heard near Lynd Top on 25.03, and a pair were in Ext Park on 31.03.
Little Egret	Away from the reservoirs, two were at Banthorpe GP on 08.03.
Great White Egret	Four or five were at RWEg on 01.03, with one on 30.03. Two flew south-east over Martinsthorpe on 31.03.
Red-necked Grebe	One remained at RWSA to 28.03.
Slavonian Grebe	Three were in RWNA to 28.03.
Black-necked Grebe	One was in RWNA to 31.03.
Spoonbill	One was on RWEg4 on 20.03.
Red Kite	Four were near Wg on 18.04. The peak count was of eight soaring over Tick on 22.03.
Marsh Harrier	One was fairly regular at RW from 04.03 to at least 12.04. A female flew north at FHP on 27.03 and one was at EBR on 31.03 and 01.04.
Buzzard	Six were over Wg on 11.03, five were over QF on 20.03, and five soared together over Tin Meadows on 03.04.
Osprey	The first bird returned on 14.03, with three noted by 20.03 and 20 by mid-April. One was at EBR on 26.03 and one at HM/FHP on 21.04.
Oystercatcher	16 were at RW on 24.03, and 27 on 16.04.
Avocet	Singles were at RWEg on 17 and 20.03, with four on 22.04. One was at EBR on 29.04.
Lapwing	Displaying birds were noted from 08.03 at Banthorpe GP, Mounts Lodge and in Ext Park. There were 37 at RW on 24.03 and 51 on 16.04.
Golden Plover	24 flew north-west over RW on 20.03.

Grey Plover	Singles were at RW on 18–19.04 and 25.04.
Ringed Plover	Singles were at RWEg4 on 31.03 and 02.04, with two on 09.04.
Little Ringed Plover	Singles were at RWEg4 on 20 and 22.03, 02 and 03. 04, with seven on 16.04 and two on 26.04.
Whimbrel	Noted at RW on seven dates between 28.03 and 26.04. All singles except for eight on 22.04. One was at EBR on 14.04.
Curlew	One called at RWEg on 01.03, with calling birds at Cott Airfield on 23.03, and a pair there on 06.04. Three were at RW on 24.03 and three were near Barrow on 10.04. Calling birds were heard at SM on 23.04. Six were at RW on 16.04.
Bar-tailed Godwit	Present at RWEg4 on eight dates between 13.04 and 30.04, with six on 22 and four on 23.04.
Black-tailed Godwit	Four were at RWEg4 on 20.03.
Ruff	Two were at RWEg4 on 22.04.
Sanderling	Three were at RWEg4 on 23.04, and two on 30.04.
Dunlin	Four were at RWEg4 on 01.03, with singles on 29.03 and 08.04, and six on 25.04.
Common Sandpiper	Singles were at RWDam on 18.04, Banthorpe GP and RWEg4 on 20.04, and two at the latter sites on 21.04.
Green Sandpiper	On 16.03, one flew over Martinsthorpe and two were at RWEg5, with singles there on 17 and 18.03, with two on 09.04 and one next day.
Spotted Redshank	Singles were at RW on 17 and 22.04.
Greenshank	One was at RWEg4 on 18.04, with three noted next day and two on 25.04.
Redshank	Eight were at RW on 24.03 and 14 on 16.04.
Wood Sandpiper	One was at RWEg on 20.04, with two next day, one on 22.04, and one on 26.04.
Woodcock	Present at TunnW to 16.03, with three on 09.03, and one in WestlandW on the latter date. Three were at RWLaxHill on 15.03.
Jack Snipe	One was at RWEg on 20.04.
Snipe	Three were near the Sailing Club at RW on 28.03, five on the count there on 16.04, two at LFP on 17.04, and two at Banthorpe GP on 20.04.
Black Tern	Four were at EBR on 22.04, and there were two at RWEg3 on 24.04, with one next day.
Sandwich Tern	One was at RWEg4 on 19.04.
Common Tern	One was at RWEg on 05.04, two were at EBR on 09.04, with 30 on 21.04. One was at LFP on 26.04.
Arctic Tern	Three at RWEg on 09.04 were the first, with three there on 13.04, and two on 16.04. About 10 were at EBR on 22.04. Four were at RWEg on 23.04 and one on 25.04.
Kittiwake	One flew through at RWSA on 22.03.
Little Gull	There was an excellent passage at RW with birds present between 05.04 and 25.04, with a peak of 19 on 09.04.
Stock Dove	Regular at BCF, Ext Park Woods and RWEg. There were three in song at QF on 20.03.
Cuckoo	One sang at RW on 24.04 and 26.04, two were at Leigh on 26.04, one was calling in PGW on 27.04, and one was at TurnpoleW on 29.04.
Barn Owl	Noted at RW in March.
Tawny Owl	Records came from BCF, CPW, Greet GC, Barrow, BW and TunnW, where a pair had three chicks in a nest box on 23.04.
Swift	One flying north at NLuff on 18.04 was our first record. Three were at RW on 26.04.
Kingfisher	Singles were noted at RWSA on 24 and 28.03, on the R. Welland at Tin Meadows on 03.04, and Stam Meadows on 14.04.
Green Woodpecker	Reported from FHP, TunnW, WestlandW, Barrow, RWEg and QF.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Drumming was heard at TunnW, WestlandW, BW, CPW, WW and Norm, with feeders visited at TunnW, Barrow and BCF.
Merlin	One was mobbing soaring Red Kites over Tick on 22.03.

Hobby	Two were at RWEg3 on 26.04, with one next day.
Peregrine	March records came from Leigh, Martinsthorpe, RW and FHP.
Jay	Noted in Ext Park Woods and BarnsG.
Raven	There were records from one regular breeding site but a pair frequented a new site throughout both months.
Willow Tit	Two, with one in song, were at Leigh on 26.04.
Marsh Tit	Singles were at feeders in TunnW on 03.03 and 27.04 and EBR on 17.03. Three sang at CPW on 23.03.
Bearded Tit	One flew by Dunlin hide at RWEg on 20.04.
Sand Martin	Few were reported following the first at RW on 01.03. Ten were there on 22.03.
Swallow	One at RW on 31.03 was the first record.
House Martin	A single was at RW with Sand Martins on 31.03, and at the Sailing Club on 03.04.
Long-tailed Tit	Noted in an Oak garden on two March dates.
Chiffchaff	One was singing at FHP on 16.03. Widespread by 20.03, with birds in BW, QF, BarnsW and CPW. 24 were in song along the south shore at RW on 28.03.
Siberian Chiffchaff	One was in song and recorded on 09.04 at Ggorse.
Willow Warbler	One was at Martinsthorpe on 02.04, with a singing bird at RW Sailing Club next day. One was singing in WestlandW on 06.04, with one at Barrow on 10.04. Six were singing at QF on 24.04. 23 were around Leigh on 26.04.
Blackcap	Singing birds were noted first at RWEg and Ggorse on 24.03, with the next at FHP on 27.03. Seven were singing along RW South Shore next day. On 24.04, 14 were singing at QF, with 22 around Leigh on 26.04.
Lesser Whitethroat	The first was at Leigh on 06.04, with one at Barrow on 10.04. Seven were singing at QF on 24.04, and seven were around Leigh on 26.04.
Whitethroat	A singing bird was at FHP on 21.04. Eight were singing at QF on 24.04 and 15 were around Leigh on 26.04.
Sedge Warbler	The first bird was at RWEg on 12.04, with one at LFP on 26.04.
Grasshopper Warbler	Two were singing near Ggorse on 24.04, and one in BW on 29.04.
Reed Warbler	First noted at RWEg on 18.04.
Nuthatch	Regular in Ext Park and FHP woods. Five were calling in BarnsW on 13.04, with one in a Man garden on 29.03.
Blackbird	Fledged young were at BarnsG on 09.04.
Fieldfare	160 were at Lynd Top on 22.03 and 248 flew north-west at Martinsthorpe on 31.03. April flocks of up to 20 were at Ext Park, Greet GC, Barrow and Upp to 22.04. 50 were at Barrow on 12.04, with the largest flock of 320 over Leigh on 19.04.
Redwing	Four at Man on 20.04 were the latest birds.
Nightingale	One was singing at RWEg from 18.04, with two on 27.04. Noted at PGW on 28.04, with two singing next day and three on 30.04.
Whinchat	One was at EBR on 29.04.
Wheatear	The first was at Luff Airfield on 17.03, with subsequent singles at RWEg, Banthorpe GP and Cott Airfield to 26.03. One was at RWEg on 18.04 with three in Ext Park on 19.04, one there on 21.04, and one at Cott Airfield on 28.04.
Tree Sparrow	Three were on RWLynd feeders on 01.03. Two were at EBR on 17.03, and one was at Hall Farm, Ext, on 23.03. Two flew over Leigh on 13.04.
Yellow Wagtail	First noted at RWEg on 02.04, with singles at the Dam on 18.04, and Ext Park on 21.04 and 23.04.
White Wagtail	Singles were at RWEg on 20 and 24.03, with 3 at the Dam on 25.03, one at RWEg on 26.04. One was at Lynd Rd Garden Centre on 21.03 and one at Man on 20.04.
Meadow Pipit	Spring north-west passage saw 77 over RW on 18.03, and 56 on 27.03. 33 flew over Martinsthorpe on 31.03.
Brambling	More widespread than usual in these months with up to four noted at feeders at RWLynd and Norm to 18.04. Up to eight were noted, probably migrating, at RW South Shore and Leigh between 04 and 09.04. 30 were on Lax Hill at RW on 09.04,

and three were at Eg on 12.04, with one in song on 18.04. Six were at Leigh on 06.04 and one at Man on 07.04.

Greenfinch	It is good to note ten singing males at BarnsG on 09.04.
Lesser Redpoll	Two were in an Oak garden on 03, 09 and 12.03, with two at TunnW on 20.03.
Crossbill	Singles flew over RWSA on 20 and 28.03.
Siskin	Two were in an Oak garden on 14.03, one at EBR feeders on 17.03, one at a Barrow feeder on 21.03, and two at a Stam garden feeder on 10.04.
Linnet	c.30 were in Ext Park on 20.03, and 60 were around Leigh on 26.04.
Yellowhammer	A flock of 37 was in Ext Park on 08.04.

Wildfowl counts for March and April 2019

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir	Fort Henry Ponds Exton Park Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit		Holywell Lake
	24.03	16.04		23.03	21.04	22.03	20.04	
Mute Swan	202	220	46	9	9	3	3	2
Greylag Goose	295	254	6	7	5	27	30	25
Canada Goose	185	91	7		1			19
Egyptian Goose	24	23						
Shelduck	20	36		3	4			
Mandarin Duck				2	4			
Wigeon	814	284	7	31				8
Gadwall	209	189	12	42	27		2	16
Teal	89	107	55	9	3	4		8
Mallard	302	329	31	94	70	6	2	32
Pintail	11	8						
Shoveler	73	137	1		4			
Pochard	18	19						
Tufted Duck	1465	835	24	59	40	2		18
Goldeneye	183	1						
Smew	3							
Goosander	4	1						
Cormorant	248	154	21		1			
Little Egret	10	11	4			1		3
Great White Egret	1							
Grey Heron	10	18		1				
Little Grebe	22	4		2				6
Great Crested Grebe	197	138	14		1			
Slavonian Grebe	1							
Black-necked Grebe	1							
Moorhen	27	44	2	13	9	1	1	11
Coot	483	299	8	48	36	2	4	8
TOTAL	4887		238	320	214	46	42	156

BOTANY

RECORDER John Rodgers

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I would like to thank Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin for their fascinating article on the flora of Rutland Churchyards, starting on the page opposite.

March/April 2019

Spring comes round once again and the **Bluebells** in our woods, especially Barnsdale and Hambleton, produce a wonderful show. Tennyson described the scene as being like 'the blue sky breaking up through the earth'. **Red Campion** is often mingled with them, whilst in Barnsdale there are clumps of **Greater Stitchwort** adding little white stars in the foreground. This year there don't seem to be as many **Primroses** and **Cowslips** as in past years. If true, I hope this is a normal cyclical change and not a presage of coming decline. On the other hand there is **Ground Ivy** all around. All the other 'usual suspects' have been recorded, violets, **Garlic Mustard**, **Dog's Mercury**, **Cow Parsley**, the first Buttercups (**Bulbous Buttercup**), **Wood Anemone** and **Early Purple Orchid**, found on the RNHS walk in Pickworth Great Wood in April. Amongst the less common flowers reported are **Goldilocks Buttercup**, found by Martin Grimes near Great Casterton, and **Shining Cranesbill** reported by Carolyn Baxter in Uppingham. As far as I can tell from past records this seems to be the only part of Rutland where this Cranesbill appears.

Many will have noticed the plants growing in the gutters and along the pavements in our towns and villages. This is before the council brings out the herbicide. They are weeds to most people but they are a very varied group of plants and perhaps even contain some valuable specimens. I remember Clive Jones finding **Amphibious Bistort** on the steps of Uppingham Town Hall some years ago.

I have just read an article in this month's BSBI News by Robin Walls. Stimulated by residents' complaints to the parish council that his village (in Dorset) was untidy, he surveyed the streets in June last year. He found 103 species growing in the gutters and along the bottom of walls. He didn't include grass verges. As he says 'that is some biodiversity'.

We seem to have a passion for tidiness, which also applies to roadside verges. *Plantlife* are beginning a campaign to reduce the cutting of verges so as to prevent species from disappearing. At the same time a UN report suggests that the world is in danger of losing up to a million plant and animal species if we don't do something to restrict global warming. Things are going to have to change.

Thanks to: C Baxter, R Edwards, M Grimes, R Lemmon, D Needham, T Mitcham, J S and J Rodgers and P Rudkin



Pickworth Great Wood, Photo, L Biddle

FLORA OF RUTLAND CHURCHYARDS

Steve Woodward & Helen Ikin

Steve Woodward is Editor of the Leicestershire & Rutland Recorder, and Helen Ikin is President of the Loughborough Naturalists.

In our 'spare' moments we have been recording in Leicestershire & Rutland churchyards. We started in earnest in 2013 and in 2018 we completed in-season visits to all Rutland churchyards. Our season is April to June, when a reasonable list of flowering plants can be made. The objective was to collect vascular plant records for the Atlas 2020 project, being run by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). We were also looking for bees and wasps, most of which appear in the same season. We have taken note of other groups as well and we have made out-of-season visits. There is always something to interest naturalists in a churchyard (Buczacki, 2018), even in winter (notably bryophytes and lichens).

Our total number of records (for all groups) is currently 4542 for Rutland, representing 516 species, of which 352 are vascular plants. All of our records are submitted, at the end of each year, to the Records Centre (LRERC) for validation by vice-county recorders. Thereafter, they will eventually be assimilated into the publicly accessible data set maintained by LRERC. Plant records go directly to the Vice-county Recorder (Geoffrey Hall) and thence into the BSBI's Distribution Database. The discipline of recording for an atlas means that our plant records are not just for the unusual species – they are dominated by common ones. For example, **Cow Parsley** *Anthriscus sylvestris* is included 64 times. There are more records than sites (see below) due to multiple visits.

These 51 sites represent all the accessible churchyards, along with a few cemeteries: Ashwell St. Mary, Ayston St. Mary the Virgin, Barrowden St. Peter, Belton in Rutland St. Peter, Bisbrooke St. John the Baptist, Braunston All Saints, Brooke St. Peter, Burley Holy Cross, Caldecott St. John the Evangelist, Clipsham St. Mary, Cottesmore St. Nicholas, Cottesmore Cemetery, Edith Weston St. Mary, Egleton St. Edmund, Empingham St. Peter, Essendine St. Mary Magdalene, Exton St. Peter & St Paul, Glaston St. Andrew, Great Casterton St. Peter & St Paul, Greetham St. Mary the Virgin, Hambleton St. Andrew, Ketton St. Mary the Virgin, Langham St. Peter & St. Paul, Little Casterton All Saints, Lyddington St. Andrew, Lyndon St. Martin of Tours, Manton St. Mary, Market Overton St. Peter & St. Paul, Morcott St. Mary the Virgin, Morcott Cemetery, North Luffenham St. John the Baptist, Oakham All Saints, Pickworth All Saints, Pilton St. Nicholas, Preston St. Peter & St. Paul, Ridlington St. Mary Magdalene & St. Andrew, Ryhall St. John, Seaton All Hallows, South Luffenham St. Mary the Virgin, Stoke Dry St. Andrew, Stretton St. Nicholas, Teigh Holy Trinity, Thistleton St. Nicholas, Tickencote St. Peter, Tinwell All Saints, Tixover St. Luke, Uppingham St. Peter & St. Paul, Wardley St. Botolph, Whissendine St. Andrew, Whitwell St. Michael & All Angels, Wing St. Peter & St. Paul.

Our flora recording is biased towards 'wild' plants, with obviously-introduced species in flower-beds being ignored. Churchyards, however, do contain locally native species that are probably introduced (e.g. **Primrose** *Primula vulgaris*) as well as introduced species that have become naturalised (e.g. **Winter Aconite** *Eranthis hyemalis*). We record as many of these as we can, but not as diligently as those that we believe to be truly wild.

We are not claiming to have 'surveyed' all Rutland churchyards. Each one typically received one visit of 45 minutes between April and June, with perhaps a supplementary visit out-of-season. We have surely missed some scarce or elusive plant species. Very early or late-flowering species are doubtless under-recorded too. On the other hand, the common and conspicuous ones are consistently recorded and we are confident that the ten most frequent are: **Daisy** *Bellis perennis* (50 sites), **Ivy** *Hedera helix*, **Germander Speedwell** *Veronica chamaedrys*, **Cow Parsley** *Anthriscus sylvestris*, **Common Nettle** *Urtica dioica*, **Creeping Cinquefoil** *Potentilla reptans*, **Cleavers** *Galium aparine*, **Creeping Buttercup** *Ranunculus repens*, **Dandelion** *Taraxacum* agg. and **Ribwort Plantain** *Plantago lanceolata* (43 sites). A further 29 species were found in at least half of the sites (25 or more).

At the other end of the frequency scale, 259 species were encountered at ten sites

or fewer. The majority are weeds and garden escapes that are common in Rutland but thinly scattered. Some are natives of grassland or woodland that find refuge in churchyards and one or two are genuinely rare. Brief notes on a selection of these are given below.

Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* is one of those ‘dandelion look-alikes’ (yellow composites) that puzzle beginners. This one has an unbranched, leafless stem with a single flower-head. The stiffly-upright stems look pale and fuzzy from a distance as the plant is clothed in forked hairs. It prefers limy soil and we have recorded it from Langham, Ryhall, Wardley and Whissendine. Other yellow composites in Rutland churchyards are **Cat’s-ear** *Hypochaeris radicata*, **Autumn Hawkbit** *Scorzonerooides autumnalis*, three kinds of **Sow-thistle** *Sonchus*, **Smooth Hawk’s-beard** *Crepis capillaris*, **Beaked Hawk’s-beard** *Crepis vesicaria* and **Mouse-ear Hawkweed** *Pilosella officinarum* – as well as the genuine **Dandelion** *Taraxacum* agg. **Lesser Hawkbit** *Leontodon saxatile* at Cottesmore needs confirming – June would be a good time to look.

Another plant to look out for in churchyard grassland is **Burnet Saxifrage** *Pimpinella saxifraga* (eight sites). It is neither a Saxifrage nor a Burnet, but an umbellifer. It resembles **Pignut** at a glance, though it is often taller, the lower leaf segments are broad and it flowers much later (late summer).

An early visit to a shady, moist grassland might be rewarded by an encounter with **Goldilocks Buttercup** *Ranunculus auricomus*. This native woodland plant seems to like churchyards (six sites including Uppingham) and can be recognised by its very different upper and lower leaves, also by its smallish and often incomplete golden-yellow flowers.

Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, a plant familiar to many of us, seems to be in steep decline in VC55: Messenger (1971) described it as ‘generally distributed’ but we found it only at Tixover. Nor have we found it on our wider Rutland rambles (i.e. beyond churchyards). It flowers late and we may have missed some populations.

Small-fruited Prickly-sedge *Carex muricata* ssp. *pairae* turned up twice (Glaston and Tixover). As an unglamorous sedge, it would scarcely be noticed except by keen botanists. This name was not in use in Messenger’s time so the status of this sedge in Rutland requires clarification.

In contrast to the previous plant, one that is often admired is **Snake’s-head Fritillary** *Fritillaria meleagris*. We found just one plant at Lyndon. This beautiful flower is questionably native in some flood-meadows (e.g. near Oxford) but certainly introduced elsewhere. The Lyndon population goes back to at least 1976 (Greenoak & Roberts, 1985, p99). The plant is evidently challenging to establish and maintain, nonetheless in churchyards it is often revered as a rare, native species.

Rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis* is a herb that is sometimes planted in churchyards. We would normally enjoy its scent but not record it, however at Glaston we noticed it had seeded itself into a wall, so it was admitted to our list there.

Grass species are difficult to detect in frequently-mown churchyards but an unusual one that we did find at Egleton in 2014 was **Swamp Meadow-grass** *Poa palustris*. Most Meadow-grasses flower in June, so it was the early flowering (19 April) that drew our attention to this one, growing at the base of the church wall (not in a swamp). A specimen was checked by Geoffrey Hall. This appears to be the second vice-county record, having been seen at Clipsham Quarry in 1967 (Messenger, 1971).

It is tempting to rank the sites by number of species found, but this would be misleading as the recording effort and seasonal coverage is uneven. Three that stand out, however are Whissendine, with 115 species, Langham with 97 and Tixover with 95. Tixover resembles a limestone grassland nature reserve, as much of it is left uncut until late in the season. The flowers and the insects that they attract are spectacular, and are well worth the hike though the fields to get there!

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BUTTERFLIES

RECORDER Richard Brown

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March/April 2019

After the early start to 2019 observations, with 5 species already noted by the end of February, March 2019 was a 'silent month' with no new species reported. However things livened up from April 1st, and we now have a total of 16 species observed in Rutland so far in 2019. This compares to just 9 species noted by the end of April 2018.

There have been a large number of observations of **Brimstones** (24 sightings from 18 different sites, with as many as 11 in one report), **Commas** (13 sightings from 8 sites), **Peacocks** (15 sightings from 12 sites) and **Small Tortoiseshells** (14 sightings from 12 sites).

A highlight

The highspot of our March/April observations is the finding of a **Clouded Yellow** in Burley Woods on 21st April. For Rutland this is unusually early for a continental migrant species, though nationally the first of the year was seen in Dorset on 24 February 2019. In Rutland there are generally fewer than 10 observations per year, usually between June and September. Often we have no observations at all in a full year – this 2019 observation is the first RNHS record since a singleton was seen in 2015, with 2016–2018 as blank years for the species.

Thanks to D and J Ball, C Baxter, P Bennett, M Grimes, R Lemmon, D Masters, D Needham, J & J Rodgers and P Rudkin.

MOTHS

RECORDER Paul Bennett

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March/April 2019

As is usual for early spring it has been a quiet period, with the trap being put outside Lyndon Centre on just two occasions. On 21st March, 252 moths were recorded of 7 species although **Small Quaker** accounted for 184 of those. The other species of note were a very early **Double-Striped Pug** and the first site record for **Oak Beauty**. On 21st April, 2 traps were put out and between them yielded 43 moths of 19 species, with 6 of these also new for the site including **Water Carpet**, **Lunar Marbled Brown** and **Twin-spotted Quaker**, these numbers more a reflection of the less frequent recorder effort at this time of year than of their rarity.

On the following day a new site at Shacklewell was trapped for the first time. It is hoped to be able to run more sessions as the year progresses after permission to do this was given by the site warden. The site itself looks promising with an open but sheltered aspect surrounded by deciduous trees and with a stream running past it. 16 moths of 11 species was a reasonable return from a 20 watt battery-operated trap with limited running time through the long night. **Dotted Chestnut** was by far the rarest moth recorded here. Although a bit worn this was unsurprising, as unusually for a moth it overwinters as an adult and has been experiencing a steady northern expansion in recent years so may become more of a feature in future traps.

The highlight moth of the reporting period was the day-flying **Orange Underwing**, originally spotted by Martin Grimes and Roy Lemmon in Pickworth Wood. When this was forwarded to the County Recorder we were informed that very few records of it existed in VC55, but on Martin and Roy's visit and two subsequent ones that I made we all found the moth quite easy to spot and in good numbers. In hazy conditions it tended to fly above head height but when the sun broke through it was fond of basking on bare ground at the main ride intersection. The other feature of note was its tendency to fly near birch trees, its larval foodplant. Whether all this was unusual and just reflected the hot weather experienced during April or that moth recorders are nocturnal people who rarely venture out looking for spring moths by day, only time will tell. It will also be interesting to see whether its rarer relative, **Light Orange Underwing**, an Aspen feeder, is also present in the wood although that may be more of a challenge to find. As a postscript to this, a record of Orange Underwing was also received from Ketton Quarry – so maybe they are like buses!

Thanks to the following for their records: P Bennett, M Grimes, R Lemmon, D Needham.

PLANT GALLS

March/April 2019

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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The season is now warming up, both literally and metaphorically, and although the galls found are mostly caused by rusts there are indications of things to come.

March saw just 3 reports, all rusts, but April had a total of 23 which include 2 mite galls and a wasp gall. Verge 5 on April 3 had the mite gall on Cleavers, which causes the leaves to distort and appear twisted. This plant grows throughout the winter and so the mites have a chance to grow from an early start, depending on the season, whereas the mite gall on Spindle, found at Bloody Oaks Quarry on April 23, can only start when the leaves begin to appear.

The Society's visit to Pickworth Great Wood on April 13 produced a sausage-shaped gall some 5 cm long on a Bramble stem, which is a first for the County. This was actually last year's gall and had tiny holes on its surface where the wasps had exited, but nevertheless is a valid record. The fact that they are much easier to see at this time of the year may be of significance.

Thanks to M Grimes and R Lemmon for their reports.

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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No records received for this period. Please continue sending in your records.

OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES

RECORDER Gill Chiverton

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September/October 2018

Red-legged Shieldbug

Pentatoma rufipes

Box Leatherbug

Gonocerus acuteangulatus

Hemiptera BUGS

Sept Two sightings of single insects at Wing

Sept One on window at Wing

Cockchafer
Melolontha melobutha

Orange Ladybird
Halyzia 16-punctata

Adonis Ladybird
Hippodamia variegata

White-lipped Snail
Cepaea hortensis

Kentish Snail, *Monacha cantiana*

November/December 2018

Orange Ladybird
Halyzia 16-punctata

Harlequin Ladybird
Harmonia axyridis

Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera*

January/February 2019

Green Shieldbug
Palomena prasina

7-spot Ladybird
Coccinell 9-punctata

White-tailed Bumble Bee
Bombus lucorum

Wild Honeybees, *Apis mellifera*

March/April 2019

Green Shieldbug
Palomena prasina

Green Tiger Beetle
Cicindela campestris

Pine Ladybird
Exochomus 4-pustulatus

16-spot Ladybird
Tytthaspis 16-punctata

7-spot Ladybird
Coccinella 7-punctata

Coleoptera BEETLES

Sept Two larvae (disturbed whilst in garden and replaced after ID) at Wing

Oct One at Ryhall Heath

Oct One at Ryhall Heath

Gastropoda SNAILS

Oct One at Horn Mill verge – very dark variety

Oct One at Horn Mill verge

Coleoptera BEETLES

Nov One on wooden post at Leighfield Fishponds

Nov One on Sycamore leaf at Bloody Oaks

Hymenoptera BEES

Nov One on mahonia flowers at Manton

Hemiptera BUGS

Feb One noted

Feb Several during last week of Feb at an Oakham garden

Hymenoptera BEES

Feb 6 busy nectaring on Winter Honeysuckle in Barrowden (last week of Feb)

Feb Good numbers on Winter Honeysuckle in Barrowden (last week of Feb)

Hemiptera BUGS

Mar Two noted in Uppingham garden, both in winter colouration.

Coleoptera BEETLES

Mar 30+ recorded on 27th at Ketton Quarry.

April One noted Ketton Quarry

Mar 5 recorded on the 30th at Martinsthorpe

Mar Noted in good numbers all month throughout Rutland, including Ketton Quarry. 4-5 Pickworth Great Wood. 85+ on the 30th in sheltered areas at Martinsthorpe.

Harlequin Ladybird
Harmonia axyridis

Mar One noted Manton garden

Dark-edged Bee-fly
Bombylius major

Mar 2-3 on the 20th at Ketton Quarry, 3-4 on 28 at Pickworth Gt Wood

Hoverfly, *Scaeva* sp.
Eristalis sp.

Apr 1-2 at Stretton Wood, 1-2 at Yew Tree Avenue, 2 at Shacklewell Hollow and 2-3 at Bloody Oaks.

Apr One noted in Uppingham

Apr One noted in same area as *Scaeva* sp. at Uppingham

Two-coloured Mason Bee
Osmia bicolor

Apr Two noted at Ketton Quarry

Parasitic Bee, *Nomad* sp

Apr One noted in Uppingham

Hairy-footed Flower Bee
Anthophora plumipes

Mar One male and one female noted in 23rd in Uppingham garden

Red-tailed Bumble Bee
Bombus lapidarius

Apr One female noted Uppingham

Buff-tailed Bumble Bee

Mar Two recorded at Barleythorpe

Mar One female in Pickworth Great Wood.

Common Carder Bee
Bombus pasquorum

Apr One queen foraging at Horn Mill. Two noted at Uppingham.

Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera*

Mar One queen noted on violets at Bloody Oaks and another at Pickworth Great Wood

Mar One noted in Manton

Apr 20-30 nectaring on dandelions at Lyddington Meadows

2-toothed Door Snail
Clausilia bidentata

Gastropoda SNAILS

Mar One recorded at Ketton Quarry woodland.

Thank you to the following people for keeping contributing to our records: C Baxter, T Caldicott, C Gallimore, M Grimes, R Lemmon, D Masters, D Needham and L Worrall.

MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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March/April 2019

Twenty years ago we were celebrating the return of **Otters** to this area, after a gap of at least 20 years. It is hard to believe that we now commonly have otters recorded and that they are considered a nuisance by some. Many of you will have read in the press about otters raiding garden ponds in Oakham, and we know that they have removed fish from many lakes in the area, including at Greetham Valley Golf Club. Luckily otters are still widely tolerated. Fishermen, however, have a different perspective, and who can blame those who have invested heavily in fish stocks for their garden ponds or for fishing lakes, for being very upset when otters remove them! Fortunately otters don't kill for the sake of killing – just for food – but they do return once they have found a good source of fish, so over a period will reduce populations. During March and April otters have been seen twice at Rutland Water; in early March one swam close to the water's edge between Berrybutts Spinney and Gibbet's Gorse, and a week or so later two otters were observed from Bittern Hide. Between these two sightings the remains of a large bream were found on the banks of the top lake at Fort Henry. In April the routine inspection of mink rafts showed evidence of otters over much of the reserve, so there is obviously a healthy population.

A large **Badger** sett has been discovered, many are active in our area, several latrines reported, and sadly four road casualties, but no live sightings this time. A member had good views of a **Weasel** at Lyndon top at the beginning of March, and three live **Stoats** were reported, from Martinsthorpe, Gypsy Lane Uppingham, near the VTC at Rutland Water, and unfortunately one road casualty was found near Barnsdale Lodge.

There have been 5 reports of **Foxes**. At Stockerston one was flushed from cover at Beaumont Chase Farm, others at Burley Wood, and Ketton. At Wader scrape a fox lurked in the reeds just in front of the hide, and at Uppingham a fox, observed to be a nursing female, was hunting for worms in a sheep field. The continued very dry weather will not have made searching for food easy for many of our mammals, especially for those feeding youngsters.

Hedgehogs have been seen at Burley-on-the-Hill and regularly observed at Whissendine and Barrow. In Cottesmore churchyard, droppings prove that hedgehogs are present and in Oakham neighbours in two areas of Barmstedt Drive are visited by at least one hedgehog. So far reports have not been on the same night – but there may be more than one! Fresh **molehills** have been recorded at Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue, near Fishponds Cottage and at Stretton Wood.

Brown hares have been out in the open during their mating rituals, the largest number, nine, seen in the Exton area, also numbers at RWNR, Hambleton, Uppingham, Cottesmore, Luffenham Heath, Pickworth and Barrow. **Rabbits** too have been recorded this month, from Uppingham, Ketton, and Quarry Farm Great Casterton, and at Market Overton three were seen to have myxomatosis. **Grey Squirrels** are reported present in many areas of RWNR, at Walk Farm Pickworth, Clipsham Park Wood, and Barnsdale Gardens.

Small mammals are represented by **Common** or **Short-tailed Voles**, one found dead on a ride at Pickworth, and also live animals at the Willows in Barrow. **Field mice** are reported from Whissendine, 2 or 3 times a week since 23rd April.

Only one **Fallow Deer** was reported, from Tunnely Wood Exton in mid-March. Unusually none were seen in or near Pickworth this time. **Muntjac** however were very commonly seen; at RWNR at Field 16 and 29, at Harrier hide, in Burley Wood, Ketton Quarry, Wing Grange, in the garden of the Willows in Barrow, a road casualty at Preston, and footprints at Gypsy Lane Uppingham.

Looking back at my records from twenty years ago, another species which returned to the area was the **Roe Deer**, then recorded at Gunthorpe, and, like the otters, we now have fairly frequent reports of Roe from across our county. One was seen by the RNHS group visit to Pickworth Wood on April 13th, and another was reported later in April from Burley Wood. Unlike the otter they do not have any 'antisocial' habits, but while fallow and muntjac deer are being culled, and poachers regularly shoot deer in our local woods, their future is not terribly secure!

Thank you to you all for your reports: J & D Ball, C Baxter, A Biddle, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, C Gallimore, M Grimes, V Hemsley, R Lemmon, M Manson, D Masters, T Mitcham, D Needham, J & A Pearce, P J Rudkin

BATS

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March/April 2019

First, I would like to make a correction to the bat records for March. During the hibernaculum check at Morcott on 17 February five Natterer's were recorded, not two as stated in March *Fieldfare*, plus two Daubenton's.

During March and April the weather was warm (often very warm) and dry; but where were all the insects? There were no direct records of bat activity in March. However, during a visit to Glaston Church droppings of Pipistrelle and probable Brown Long-eared bats were found on 28 March. While on a walk south of Oakham

I found a tree on the edge of Brook Covert East, SK857068, with a hole that had a black 'slick' beneath it that could be a potential bat roost – worth a look in June.

Common Pipistrelle

In April I saw occasional single Common Pipistrelle bats flying briefly over my garden, SK866091, but no feeding buzzes were heard. On 20 April bats were foraging on a warm evening over gardens in Ketton Road, Hambleton, SK902075, including along the boundary of Hambleton Hall Hotel. The female Common Pipistrelle found in Oakham Market Place in February (recorded in March *Fieldfare*) proved to have a broken elbow. Although she continued to eat well she was unable to open the left wing so was put down by the vet on 8 April. Pipistrelle droppings were found in Egleton Church on 8 April, including a few fresh ones.

Soprano Pipistrelle

The bat boxes in both Burley and Barnsdale Woods were checked on 10 April. At Barnsdale, 50 boxes were checked and approximately 36 bats were found, all Soprano Pipistrelle, including a group of three in one of the boxes. This box also contained a very active male; he weighed 4.5 g, while all the females found weighed more than 5.0 g. In Burley Wood most of the boxes were empty except for Box BW4 at SK890094. This box, situated on an oak next to a ride near the southern edge of the wood, contained eight bats, all female except for one that flew before its details could be recorded. Their weight varied from 5.09 g to 5.59 g and they all looked in superb condition. One box contained a partly constructed bird's nest, possibly blue tit.

Brown Long-eared bat

Apart from the droppings in Glaston church, the only other record of this species was a male bat found grounded in a Market Overton garden on 16 April and taken to Oakham Veterinary Hospital. It had catastrophic damage to the membranes of both wings which was difficult to explain. Although no bones appeared broken, the edge of the membranes were lacerated (or possibly burnt) and dried out; in the central part of both wings the membranes were dried out and, in some areas, fused together, so the wings could only partially open. With no hope of recovery the bat was euthanased. On a happier note, the male found at Hambleton Hall Hotel in October was released on 20 April.

Natterer's bat

On 17 April, around midday on a warm sunny day, children helping with an event at Rutland Farm Park in Oakham found a bat in a patch of coarse vegetation. This is part of a wild, semi-wooded area not usually open to the public (SK865082). It proved to be a male Natterer, starved and dehydrated, which sadly died soon after, but it was a very unusual record. This is a relatively less common species and the first time Natterer's bat ever to be recorded in Oakham, although a small number have been recorded around Rutland Water, for instance in a bat box at RW Egleton, during mist netting in Burley Wood and during harp trapping at RW Egleton and Hambleton Peninsula.

My thanks to Joelle Woolley and her team from RWNR and Linda Biddle for help with checking the bat boxes.

REPORTS ON RNHS FIELD TRIPS IN MARCH/APRIL/EARLY MAY

Sunday 24 March 2019

Eyebrook Reservoir Walk

On a very bright and sunny March morning RNHS members had a walk around the private grounds of this attractive reservoir. March can always be a tricky time, especially for birds, as it is between the winter ducks and the spring migrants, and so it proved to be with our feathered friends being few and far between. That said, the whole group contributed to spotting and identifying various birds from Blue Tits and Great Tits along with the more unusual Goldcrest and Tree Creeper in the wooded area, to Great Crested Grebe, Wigeon, Goldeneye and Gadwall on the water. Osprey had already been reported at nearby Rutland Water and one was identified here – in the distance – and it quickly disappeared from sight.

Our thanks to Ifor Jones of Eyebrook Trout Fishery for giving us permission to access this site.

Peter Scott

Saturday 13 April

Pickworth Great Wood in April

It was a cool and cloudy April morning, large dark clouds threatening rain, as 12 members assembled at the Quarry Farm entrance to Pickworth Great Wood, and walked up the hill towards the centre of the wood. As we passed an old hedgerow we heard chaffinch and bluetits chattering. The Coltsfoot were just about over, and dandelions beginning to flower, and as we stood listening we heard a Raven and saw it flying overhead. Chiffchaffs with their insistent song and Willow Warblers' falling trills announced that spring really was here. Wrens sang loudly from in the bushes as we walked along the rides, where masses of Primroses were in full bloom, Violets still in evidence, and lots of Dog's Mercury. The colour of very occasional spikes of Early Purple Orchid stood out, Ramsons (Wild Garlic) was just beginning to flower, and Wood Anemones were in profusion in the wood, the odd Bluebell also giving a flash of blue.

As we reached a junction of the rides we heard an explosion of call that announced the presence of a group of Marsh Tits, feeding and fussing among the brambles at the edge of the ride. We were lucky enough to get lovely views of these birds as they flitted among the foliage, black heads and smart grey and white plumage bright among the green. Further along the ride a Speckled Wood butterfly flew across, and Badger diggings and scufflings were found, the dry weather making food difficult for them to find. Looking down another ride we were treated to a brief sight of a Roe deer that turned to look at us before rushing off into the undergrowth and disappearing. Garden Warblers were also heard, Tree Creeper and Coal Tit, and Nuthatch calling a little further off.

As we were about to return to our cars a small moth fluttered by, and was quickly identified as an Orange Underwing, soon accompanied by others. This species had been reported earlier in the week from elsewhere in the area, and was thought to be a new species for this part of our county, so it was an exciting way to end our visit, which had been warmer and drier than any of us had expected when we set off. It had been well worth chancing the weather! (A complete list of species seen can be found on the website.)

Linda Biddle

Saturday May 4

Dawn Chorus, Pickworth Great Wood

It was a bitterly cold morning (temperature 2 °C on the gauge in the car) as we assembled at 3.45 am in Pickworth Great Wood, having been able to drive up into the wood, through Quarry Farm cottages. There were 10 of us under a clear sky, all well wrapped up and ready for whatever the weather might bring, with torches and chairs and plenty of hot coffee. There were one or two latecomers, so the first small group set off to walk into the wood and set up for the morning session. I followed a few minutes later with the others, chatting quietly as we walked, and was astonished to hear a bird in full song in the pitch blackness. We chatted no more but went to join the others sitting spellbound to hear the Nightingale pouring out his beautiful refrain. This bird continued to sing almost without break for the duration of our stay, and his song was joined by at least two more nightngales from other parts of the wood. At times it was difficult to pick out the songs of other species with the full volume serenade from the nightingale!

We recorded when each bird species began to sing, the first as usual being the Robin, followed by the Blackbird, and a Cuckoo flying overhead, and other species, until at around 5.00 am the chorus was at its peak. Listening intently we enjoyed the full chorus for perhaps 15 minutes, until the sound gradually began to reduce.

By 5.30 am we were ready for a walk around the wood to warm up, and by now it was full daylight, so we were able to see the masses of Primroses along the rides, with the occasional Wood Anemone, Ramsons and one or two Early Purple Orchids flowering, and a lovely group of Water Avens, with their pretty pink drooping heads nodding in the breeze. A few more birds were added to the list of species we had collected, and a couple of Fallow deer were feeding contentedly as we came down



a ride through dense woodland. By 6.30 am we were all ready to return home for a well earned breakfast! It is always rewarding to be treated to a full chorus, without the intrusion of traffic sounds, and it was good to be reassured that the birds are still returning to this particular wood!

Linda Biddle



Early morning at Luffenham Heath Gold Club. Photo, D Cotter.

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