

See pages 15 and 16
for your 2017 Annual
Programme; and page
14 for photocopyable
record cards



Waxwing, Peter Scott.

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A Happy 2017 to all, and let's make it one full of wildlife and stimulating activities! We look forward to seeing many of you at our planned wide range of events, outlined in the **2017 Annual Programme** on pages 15 and 16 (which you may like to cut out and use as a reminder).

2016 was a year of change, both inside RNHS and out, and 2017 will bring challenges as a result.

Those of you who were able to be at VAR for our January meeting will have been heartened by Chris Gerrard's talk outlining the enlightened activities and plans of Anglian Water, which obviously have environmental issues high on the agenda. It is up to us individually and as a society to try to ensure that in spite of the challenges of financial and organisational change, environment remains a high priority in other Government policies and schemes. Chris suggested that members should be part of the consultation process which AW will begin this year to make their 2020-2025 five year plan, and I would like to encourage you all to do so, and to take any opportunity to influence other schemes for the benefit of the environment. A healthy environment is essential for the health, wealth and security of our society, and we cannot afford to let government, national or local, conveniently forget that.

The minutes of the 2016 AGM will appear on the website in time for the 2017 AGM on Tuesday March 7.

Membership subscription

There are a number of members who have not yet paid their subscription for 2017. November's *Fieldfare* came with a Membership Subscription form on a separate sheet of paper, or you can just send me a cheque with your details as soon as possible. If we don't receive your fees, your membership will lapse, and this will be the last *Fieldfare* you receive. Thank you to all members who have already paid their subscriptions.

Margaret Conner, *Treasurer/Membership*



Adopt a Verge

Closer to home, the eagle-eyed among you have already spotted that our conservation verges have been adorned with some attractive new signs, thanks to Rutland CC (see left – let's hope the grass doesn't get too high).

This is an important move, and shows that keeping up the pressure often works.

A faithful few members have monitored some of the conservation verges for many years, and we would like to see more members becoming involved in this activity. Please think about whether you could spare a few hours in May, June and July to 'adopt' a verge, or at least keep an eye out for unsuitable activities on them, and let us know about any problems.

Linda Biddle, *Chairman*

Photographic competition

It is obvious from photos sent in to *Fieldfare* and our evening meetings that we have some excellent photographers among us. We would like in true Countryfile style/tradition/imitation to hold a competition, and use the best 13 photographs to compile a **RNHS calendar** for 2018.

Photographic entries can be of any Rutland wildlife or countryside. Members can submit up to 3 photographs, but only one per entrant will be used for the calendar.

The closing date for entries has to be **Friday 15th September**, so that we can decide the winners of the competition and organise the printing of the calendar. You can see all the photographs at the Photography indoor meeting on November 7, where calendars should be ready for sale.

Please send entries to **Peter Scott**, email: peter.scott27@btopenworld.com, address: 12 Tees Close, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6SP.



Winter – a timely thought

In the middle of January, I was walking round Barnsdale Car Park, Rutland Water, looking for early flowers when I saw a bright patch of brilliant blue amongst the Dog's Mercury, and took a photograph. At home, I tentatively identified it as Cobalt Crust (*Terana caerulea*), which is a crust-like fungus, and sent off a possible record to Naturespot. Their expert confirmed the record, which is the first on Naturespot and only the sixth record for VC55 (Leics. & Rutland). There is always something interesting to find however gloomy the weather!

Martin Grimes

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DIARY DATES

RNHS EVENING MEETINGS

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

Tuesday February 7, 7.30 pm

Dragonflies

By Mick Parfitt and Henry Curry of the British Dragonfly Society. The Society is now at Wicken Fen but for many years was based at Miriam Rothschild's estate in Ashton, Northants, where several of our older members were involved in the work of the Society. See <http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk>.

Tuesday March 7, 7.30 pm

AGM and A year at Ketton Quarry

A short AGM followed by Jenny Harris talking about Ketton Quarry, with photographs by Dave Needham.

Tuesday April 4, 7.30 pm

Great Fen Project

Henry Stanier is the Great Fen Ecology and Recording Officer, a longstanding RNHS member, and just the person to give an authoritative account of the Great Fen. This is one of the most important restoration projects in Europe, see <http://www.greatfen.org.uk>.

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.

Sunday February 12, 10.30 am

Life on Frampton Marsh (RSPB)

Led by Peter Scott, RNHS. This is rapidly becoming one of the premier birding sites on the east coast. A variety of habitats supports many breeding species, together with an ever increasing list of passage birds, including many rarities.

Meet at the RSPB Visitor Centre car park, grid ref: TF 356 392, postcode PE20 1AY. (Suggested donation for non-members £2.) The paths are in general very good, and there are several hides; but the reserve is very exposed so warm clothing is required.

More information about the reserve can be found on the RSPB website www.rspb.org.uk/Frampton_Marsh.

Queries: Peter Scott, 07535 508932.

Sunday March 5, 10.30 am

A walk by Eyebrook Reservoir

Led by Peter Scott, RNHS, with the EBR Wildlife Group. Meet in the Eyebrook Reservoir car park at the bottom of the hill at Stoke Dry and take a walk along the road to the bridge to get a good view of the wildfowl on the reservoir at this time of year. If time allows we will investigate the woods along the reservoir edge. Almost anything can turn up. In recent years there has been a long-staying Bittern, although this has proved to be elusive and in fact last year may not have been seen – but you never know.

Underfoot conditions should be reasonable although flooding can occur in very wet weather and as usual at this time of year please dress accordingly. There may be a stile to negotiate to get into the woods. Grid ref: SP 853964. Queries: Peter Scott, 07535 508932.

Sunday April 30, 9.30 am

Springtime in Burley Wood

Note earlier start time. Phil Rudkin will lead this annual Spring walk to Burley Wood, please bring your membership card which gives permission for entry. It can be very muddy, appropriate footwear essential. Meet at the entrance gate on the A606, park with care on the verge. Grid ref: SK 892093. Queries: Phil Rudkin, 01780 762998.

Saturday May 6, 4.00 am

Dawn Chorus in Burley Wood

Led by Linda and Anthony Biddle, enjoy the Dawn Chorus in this ancient woodland, followed by breakfast at the VCR. Warm clothing, suitable footwear and membership card needed, and perhaps a picnic chair! Meet at the entrance gate on the A606, park with care on the verge. Grid ref: SK 892093. Queries: Biddle, 01780 762108 or 07749 636919.

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, Hambleton Road, LE15 8AD. Entry £1.

Monday 20 February, 7.30 pm

Hedgehogs

Simon Thompson, Senior Hedgehog Officer from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, will talk about hedgehogs. See page 15 for local news of hedgehogs.

Monday 20 March, 7.30 pm

Dragonflies

Claire Install, Senior Conservation Officer from the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, will talk about dragonflies.

LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST, BOURNE GROUP

For details of LWT events, see www.lincstrust.org.uk, or phone 01507 526677 in office hours. Bourne group meetings are held at the Methodist Church Hall, Bourne.



RNHS Fineshade meeting on January 8, see Report page 13. Photo Phil Rudkin.

WEATHER

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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November 2016

Atmospheric pressure and wind Pressure was high at both the start and the end of the month, and in between there were two cyclonic episodes, during one of which the month's lowest pressure, 981.5 mb at 9.00 on the 20th, was recorded. This was the result of storm Angus, which also gave rise to considerable rainfall and high winds. The last week of the month was notable for typical anticyclonic conditions – high pressure, clear skies and low temperatures and wind speeds.

Rain A wet November with a total of 100.9 mm (3.97 in) recorded here. This is 169% of my long-term mean of 26 years and is the second highest November total I have recorded since I began in 1990. It was exceeded only by November 2000, which had a total of 108.2 mm. Storm Angus, referred to above, gave us 53.3 mm in 3 days, or 53% of the month's total.

Temperature This was the 9th coldest November in the decade 2007–2016, with a mean minimum of 2.48 °C (2010 1.96 °C), a mean maximum of 9.10 °C (2010 8.25 °C) and an overall mean of 5.79 °C (2010 5.11 °C). The last three days were very cold, the lowest overnight minimum of the month was 4.8 °C on 27th/28th, and the lowest daytime maximum occurred on the next day, the 29th, and was 5.4 °C. There was a total of 5 air frosts in the month.

December 2016

Atmospheric pressure and wind This was essentially a month of high pressures. The lowest I recorded was 1017 mb at 09.00 on the 21st and the highest was 1041 mb at the same time on the 28th. This latter is the highest I have recorded since I started noting this parameter in June 1995, and I kept a watch on the barometer that day. At 16.30 it had reached 1043 mb, a fact confirmed by the RAF Wittering website.

Winds were SE–W throughout the month and apart from during storm Barbara, 23–24th inclusive, they were of low velocity with some foggy mornings.

Temperature A relatively warm December, the mean maximum 8.96 °C, and the overall mean 5.63 °C, were both third in the decade 2007–2016; and the mean minimum 2.29 °C was fourth. There were two cold periods, the 3rd–6th inclusive, which produced an overnight minimum of –3.1 °C on the 3rd–4th; and then the 29th–30th which gave us both the lowest overnight minimum of the month, –4.4 °C on 26th–27th and also the lowest daytime maximum of 1.9 °C on the 28th. The highest daytime maximum was 14.6 °C on the 8th.

Rainfall A very warm dry December with 15.6 mm of rainfall recorded here. This equates to just 0.61 inches, and is the lowest December rainfall I have recorded in 26 years; it is 37.5% of my LTM. There was no rainfall recorded on 21 days and on another five only a trace, this latter being too little to measure.

The total rainfall I recorded for 2016 was 675.7 mm (26.6 in) and this represents 111% of LTM.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

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E-mail: chasgall@hotmail.com

November/December 2016

The only two sightings have been of a surprisingly active female Smooth Newt in my vegetable garden in Wing on 7th December and a large freshly dead Common Toad on the road in Preston on 11th December.

My thanks to T Caldicott for his record.

BIRDS

RECORDER Terry Mitcham

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November/December 2016



Mandarin Ducks, Terry Mitcham

Some excellent birds in these months concluded a successful year for local bird watchers. As ever, Rutland Water was to the fore with the county's first **Surf Scoter** and a **Green-winged Teal** in support. Other scarce wildfowl included **Long-tailed Duck** and **Common Scoter** along with all five grebes. **Great White Egrets** increased and two **Bitterns** were seen at Egleton. Away from Rutland Water, a **Great Grey Shrike** by Oakham Canal was well received and a **Glaucous Gull** roosted at Eyebrook. So far, few **Waxwings** have stayed for long but there is still time for them to plunder any remaining berries

My thanks to the following for their records and best wishes for rewarding bird watching in 2017 to all who have contributed this year: T Appleton, R Backer, D Ball, P Bennett, A Biddle, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, J Davis, M & G Griffin, A H J Harrop, T Land, P Langston, LROS, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, T Moffatt, B Moore, D Needham, J W & M Nourish, J S & J Rodgers, RWNR, P Rudkin.

(See also Wildfowl Counts).

Pink-footed Goose	c.45 flew east over Gt Cast on 02.11. One was at RWNA from 08.11 and six flew south at Greet GC on 13.11.
White-fronted Goose	One was in RWNA on 27.12.
Greylag Goose	186 were at EBR on 19.11.
Egyptian Goose	Two were regular at LFP in both months, two flew over Martinsthorpe on 29.11, and two were at FHP on 11.12.
Shelduck	One returned to FHP on 13.12, with two there on 28.12.
Mandarin Duck	A male was at FHP on 05.11, a remarkable 17 were by Rygate Lake in Ext Park on 11.11, with two there on 11.12.
Wigeon	115 were on a flooded field at Cott on 12.12.
Green-winged Teal	A male was at RWNA from 17.12 to the end of the year.
Mallard	On ponds at Greet GC there were 43 on 13.11 and 44 on 18.12. 48 were at Cott on the latter date.
Red-crested Pochard	Present at RW from at least 06.11 to the end of Dec, with a max of seven on 15.12.
Scaup	Up to three were at RW from 25.11 to the end of the year.
Long-tailed Duck	A female was at RW from 30.11 to at least 20.12.
Common Scoter	Up to three were at RW from 08.11 to 31.12, with one at EBR on 28.11.
Surf Scoter	A first-winter bird was found at RW Dam on 27.12, remaining into the new year. This is the first county record of this North American species.
Goldeneye	A female at FHP on 23.11 was the first there since Jan 2010
Smew	At RW a redhead on 24.11 was our first record with a max of six by the end of Dec. Only one male was reported. EBR had birds from 29.11 with a peak of four, including two males on 29.11 and 03.12.
Red-breasted Merganser	A male was in RWNA on 23.11.
Goosander	Noted at RWEg from at least 14.11 (three) to the end of the year, with five on 12.12.
Ruddy Duck	The female at RW was seen intermittently to the end of the year.
Great Northern Diver	Two were at RW on 20.11, remaining to at least 27.11. Thereafter one was reported up to 18.12.
Bittern	Reported from RWEg from 05.12 (two) with a single to 22.12.
Little Egret	Away from the reservoirs there were 2 near FHP and 6 at Holywell Lake on 30.11.
Great White Egret	Present at RW throughout both months, with nos increasing to five on 18.12.
Little Grebe	Good nos returned to FHP with 21 reported on 02.12 and 22.12. Six were at Holywell Lake on 30.11.
Red-necked Grebe	One remained in RWSA throughout both months.

Slavonian Grebe	One was at RW from 18.11, with two noted from 09.12.
Black-necked Grebe	Up to three were in RWNA throughout both months.
Red Kite	A small roost at Cott Wood attracted 15 birds on 23.11.
Sparrowhawk	Noted at FHP and Wing in Nov.
Buzzard	Five over Greet GC on 06.11 was the peak count.
Kestrel	Well reported with birds at FHP/Ext Park, RW, Shacklewell, Pick, Barrow and QF.
Peregrine	The RWEg female (ringed at Derby cathedral) was seen regularly. Other sightings were at Norm, FHP, Martinthorpe and Man.
Water Rail	Singles were at FHP and LFP on five dates between 13.11 and 18.12.
Moorhen	The ponds at Greet GC had 27 on 13.11 and 30 on 18.12.
Golden Plover	On 10.11 there were c.200 at EBR with 112 there on 17.12. Up to 20 were in the Leigh area between 04 and 10.12. Just 14 were at RW on 18.12, and there were 87 near Pick on 27.12.
Lapwing	Some high counts. At RW there were 2360 on 13.11 and 5470 on 18.12. EBR had 105 on 19.11 and 732 on 17.12. 111 were on arable land in Ext Park on 18.11.
Whimbrel	A long-staying bird was in RWNA to at least 25.12.
Curlew	Five were at RW on 13.11.
Black-tailed Godwit	One remained at RW from 07.11 to the end of the year.
Knot	Two were at RWEg on 08 and 09.12, with one on 18.12.
Dunlin	Present at RW from 10.11 to the end of Dec, with a max of 68 on 18.12. At EBR there were 26 on 29.30/11 and 31 on 31.12.
Little Stint	One was at EBR on 19.11.
Green Sandpiper	Present at RW up to 18.12, with a max of six on 13.11. At EBR there were three on 29/30.11.
Redshank	There were nine at RW on 13.11 and 16 on 18.12.
Jack Snipe	There were six at EBR on 04.12.
Woodcock	Two were at TunnW on 11.11, with four there on 04.12. Eight were flushed in Westland Wood on 09.12. One or two were noted at Leigh, PGW, PC, Mor, RW, Rid and Wg from 01.12 to the end of the year.
Snipe	Reservoir counts were four on 13.11 at RW and 17 there on 18.12. There were five at EBR on 19.11 and 12 there on 30.11. There were seven over Leigh on 03.11, 15 at RWLynd on 05.11 and four at FHP on 11.12.
Little Gull	A first-winter was at EBR on 03.12.
Yellow-legged Gull	An adult was at RWEg throughout both months.
Glaucous Gull	A juv roosted at EBR on 28.11, 02.12 and 29.12.
Stock Dove	c.40 were noted in the Leigh area in both months.
Woodpigeon	Passage to the south or SW was reported from the Leigh area in Nov with 1550 on 02.11, 1480 on 07.11 and 630 on 30.11.
Barn Owl	Birds were reported from Clips/Strett, Lynd Top (three), Wg, LFP and RW between 23.11 and 31.12.
Tawny Owl	Regularly heard at Upp in both months, HM on 03.11, and Barrow in Dec. Seven were heard calling in the Leigh area on 27.11, with six on 02.12 and four on 11.12.
Short-eared Owl	One was on the TTW at RW on 18.11.
Kingfisher	One was by the small lake in Ext Park on 11.12.
Green Woodpecker	Reported only from FHP and QF.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Recorded at TunnW, PGW and CPW (three). Drumming was heard at RWEg on 18.12 and TunnW (two) on 28.12.
Great Grey Shrike	A much appreciated bird was by the canal just north of Oak from 06 to 11.11.
Magpie	Flocks of 12 and 19 were in the Leigh area on 13.11.
Jay	Widespread but under-recorded, reports came from TunnW, BarnsW, Greet GC, FHP and RWEg.

Jackdaw	The large roost at Glast was observed from 30.11, when c.4800 were estimated to leave it at 07.00 hr. Figures for 03 and 04.12 were 3500 and 3000 respectively.
Raven	All records were of singles or pairs at Wg, Oak, Greet GC, Barrow and FHP/Ext.
Goldcrest	Two were noted at KQ on 05.12.
Willow Tit	Nov singles were at LFP on three dates and one was near Rid on 27.12.
Marsh Tit	Regular at TunnW feeders in both months with other records from BarnsW, Greet GC and CPW.
Cetti's Warbler	Heard at RWEg throughout both months. For the first time one was also seen at a site away from RW on 16.11.
Chiffchaff	Two were in an Upp garden on 05.11 and one or two were noted at RWEg between 13. and 19.11, with birds present near Berrybutts Spinney on 23.11 and 25.12. One was at Leigh on 01 and 07.12.
Blackcap	A female was in a Stam garden on 03.12, and a male in an Oak garden on 07.12.
Nuthatch	Records were received from BarnsW, CPW, FHP, TunnW (at feeders) and Ext Park.
Waxwing	Rutland has received only fleeting visits so far. Six were at Lydd on 11.11, with eight there on the next two days. c.25 flew north over the A47 at Mor on 26.11, and there were 14 along the railway line at NLuff on 27.11. One was on berries near Greet GC on 28.11.
Starling	Autumn passage westwards in the Leigh Martinsthorpe area was noted between 02 and 13.11. Nos counted were 750 (02), 600 (03), 1872 (08), 770 (13). On 19.11, c.3000 flew from the RW roost in Heron Bay.
Blackbird	There were high counts of presumed winter migrants. 60 were around Leigh on 08.11 with a similar number at RWEg on 20.12. c.80 were around Rid on 23.12, with 87 on 27.12.
Fieldfare	1700 were grounded by fog at Martinsthorpe on 01.11. Westerly movement along the Chater valley produced counts of 850 on 05.11 and 450 on 26.11. Other notable flocks were 235 over Leigh on 03.11, c.200 near HM/FHP on 05.11, 740 at Mor on 03.12 and c.450 there next day.
Redwing	Some accompanied the Fieldfare flocks noted above but nos were much lower. The largest number reported was 550 heading NE/north at Leigh on 27.11. Two visited a Stam garden briefly on 31.12.
Mistle Thrush	Noted at Oak on 16.12.
Stonechat	Up to three were at EBR between 07 and 29.11. At RW birds were at Eg and Lynd, with at least three at Eg and a pair at Lynd.
Tree Sparrow	Up to eight were in the Leigh area in both months. Four flew over Martinsthorpe on 26.11, and one was in a Barrow garden on 05.12. The key county site now appears to be the Lynd Centre, where 17 were around the feeders on 24.12.
Grey Wagtail	Singles were at Geest sewage works, FHP, Greet GC and EBR from 04.11–28.12.
Meadow Pipit	There were 52 along RW south shore on 25.12 and c.70 near Norm Church on 28.12.
Water Pipit	Singles were at RWEg on 01 and 03.11, and in SA on 15.11.
Chaffinch	The Leigh roost had 166 on 27.11, rising to 260 on 22.12. c.100 were around Mor on 04.12.
Brambling	Up to ten were noted at Martinsthorpe, Pilt, RW south shore, EBR, Rid, Wg, Mor and HM between 06.11 and 31.12. The Leigh finch roost had 24 on 11.12 and c.20 on 22.12.
Goldfinch	26 were at BCF feeders on 10.11.
Siskin	Six flew over Greet GC on 13.11 and there were ten at EBR on 30.11. Larger flocks were 50 at LFP on 25.11, 20 in BarnsW on 15.12 and c.70 at RWEg on 20.12.
Linnet	c.100 flew over Martinsthorpe on 02.11, with 145 on 04.11 and 110 on game crops there on 26.11. c.100 were near Rid on 23.12.
Lesser Redpoll	One with Siskins at BarnsW on 15.12 was the only record.
Bullfinch	Up to four were noted at EBR, Oak Canal, PGW and QF.
Reed Bunting	There were 10 at game crops near Martinsthorpe on 26.11 and c.20 at Leigh on 10.12.

November/December 2016 Wildfowl counts (No November count at EBR.)

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir	Fort Henry Ponds /Exton Park Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit		Holywell Lake	
	13.11	18.12		17.12	11.11	15.12	10.11	15.12	11.11
Mute Swan	287	362	96	5	5	5			
Pink-footed Goose	1	1							
Greylag Goose	758	1003	164	27	35				22
Canada Goose	611	650	20						36
Barnacle Goose	2	2							
Egyptian Goose	59	27		1					
Shelduck	4	6							
Mandarin Duck				17					
Wigeon	3658	3629	485	114	192			28	33
Gadwall	764	1037	25	84	82			6	25
Teal	1172	1357	429	26	29	20	44	4	2
Green-winged Teal		1							
Mallard	747	1137	246	147	88	5	4	138	145
Pintail	125	192	2	1					
Shoveler	169	77	4	23	8	1	1		
Red-crested Pochard		5							
Pochard	83	164	2						
Tufted Duck	2311	1958	40	46	34	20	1	22	16
Scaup	2								
Long-tailed Duck		1							
Common Scoter	4								
Goldeneye	166	246	40						
Smew		6	2						
Goosander	4	14							
Ruddy Duck	1	1							
Great Northern Diver		1							
Cormorant	392	195	32		1	4			
Bittern		1							
Little Egret	17	23	3		1	6			
Great White Egret	3	5							
Grey Heron	16	21	5		1				
Little Grebe	89	91	3	11	19			19	10
Great Crested Grebe	373	420	88						
Slavonian Grebe		2							
Black-necked Grebe	1	3							
Red-necked Grebe	1	1							
Water Rail	2	10	1						
Moorhen	111	119	3	36	25	3	3	24	21
Coot	2389	2389	206	75	82			9	11
Kingfisher	1	1						1	

BOTANY

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January 2017

It's a bit too early in the year for there to be records of flowering plants. There are odd signs of life among flowers; the odd Groundsel or Dandelion or Daisy but it won't be long before there is plenty to be seen, so long as we don't get a sudden and severe winter. By the end of January last year we had 20 species reported. Among these were White Deadnettle, Red Campion, Dog's Mercury and Dove's-foot Cranesbill. Winter Heliotrope, growing by the bridge over the canal on the road between Ashwell and Langham, is also an early flower. So too is Lesser Celandine. Graham Worrall always went to Seaton where there are Lesser Celandine in the bank below the church. This was his marker for the earliest flowers. Some years he was able to find them on the 2nd or 3rd of January. Look out too for Snowdrop by the end of the month.

What about a New Year's resolution? Linda Biddle has asked on page 2 about adopting a verge. If you are worried about your ability to recognise plants it is easy to go out with an expert. Each of the recorders would be only too pleased to help. It's the way all of us started. How about it in 2017?

BUTTERFLIES

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

MOTHS

RECORDER Paul Bennett

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No reports were received, with the mild autumn weather giving way to colder conditions.

This year's pattern of a mild and damp winter followed by a cool spring and early summer has been a recurring feature in recent years and is a problem for both moths and recorders. Firstly, mild winter weather enables predators to survive in greater numbers and also encourages larvae to become prematurely active which exposes them to these predators. Secondly, damp and temperate conditions lead to lush and vigorous grass growth which outcompetes those foodplants which moths rely on at all stages of their life cycle. A warmer spring would encourage spring emerging moths to become more active and enable recorders to observe how well they have survived a succession of poor years. Balmy spring weather – we would all raise a glass to that!

PLANT GALLS

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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No reports were received during these 2 months, this is not surprising as the 'season' has finished. At the Recorders' Meeting on December 6, I was asked how many galls we have records for in the County, which was not a question I could answer with any degree of accuracy. This prompted me to remedy the situation and on doing a count I was surprised to find that the answer is 191 species.

The group with the highest number of species that induce galling is the mites with 48, followed by the midges with 39, the rust fungi with 32 and the parasitic wasps with 26. All the other 10 groups are in single figures. This may sound complicated, but you may not even see the galler, However, the shape and size of the gall tells you which galler it is.

I would like to thank all members who have sent in records in the last year and wish everyone a happy New Year.

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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There is always some interest at this late stage of the Orthoptera season; and despite two days of frosts on the 2nd and 3rd November (which usually finishes most of our insects off), it was pleasing to receive a report from the Society's 'Bat Woman' Jenny Harris, for the 22nd November. Jenny was most likely carrying out her duties at the LRWT reserve at Ketton Quarry when she found a very sleepy female Oak Bush Cricket, resting on a Bramble leaf – the last Orthopteran species for 2016.

On Sunday morning 13th November, I followed my usual ritual, attending the Remembrance Service at the War Memorial in Broad Street, Stamford. It was a lovely day, and afterwards, I got into my car (bat detector on the back seat), and went to visit Quarry Farm, Stamford; but all was quiet! Clear sky, dry and calm, temperature 12 °C. Next I visited another likely spot, Walk Farm, Great Casterton. I parked the car in the tiny 'pull-in' at the footpath entrance – my last chance! Nothing in the hedgerow next to the road, so with trepidation I walked into the lane, and a few yards along the narrow pathway, the bat detector picked up at least six Speckled Bush Cricket males stridulating in the mixed hedgerow – the last stridulation of the 2016 season.

An article appeared in my daily paper on 28th December, with the headline 'Boom or bust? How a soggy summer affected our wildlife'. There were winners and losers, and one paragraph stated 'Bees and some butterflies were among the big wildlife losers of 2016, but while the insects suffered with the rain, farmers had a bumper hay and silage harvest'. The quotes are from the report by the National Trust.

However, our Rutland Crickets and Grasshoppers had a reasonably good season, with a slow start followed by a catch-up later in the season. Richard Brown inputted this season's new records into the current system, and was pleased to report that we had gained a few more new tetrads in 2016; Richard has kindly agreed to update the distribution maps (at the end of season 2017), thank you Richard!



Large conehead *Ruspolia nitidula*

Finally, on page 12 of the September *Fieldfare*, members will probably remember my comments about new species (hoped for), to appear in Rutland. I mentioned especially the Great Green Bush Cricket (photo on the back page). I have one more to mention, a rare species in Britain, but there have been occasional reports over the years. This is the Large Conehead, *Ruspolia nitidula*, a very large relative of our Long-winged and Short-winged Coneheads. On holiday in France in September 2015 and August 2016, I became familiar with this species, and a photograph is included on the left. Furthermore, I recorded its stridulations at night, and it is an amazing sound indeed. It would be fantastic to have this Cricket singing in the fields in Rutland one day!

November 2016

Oak Bush Cricket, *Meconema thalassinum*

One female on Bramble stem (looking torpid)! 22 November; on a chilly day at Ketton Quarry, in the cutting of the valley (SK 977053). This was a good find, and is the last Orthopteran to be observed in 2016.

Speckled Bush Cricket, *Leptophyes punctatissima*

The last stridulating of season 2016! About 6 stridulating males (at 35 kHz) on the bat detector, located in a stronghold of this species, in Hawthorn hedgerow at the entrance lane to Walk Farm, Great Casterton, 13 November. Clear, sunny afternoon, dry and calm. Temperature: 12 °C (TF 016108).

Contributors: Jenny Harris and Phil Rudkin.

OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES RECORDER Gill Chiverton

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

MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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November/December/ January 2016

The first **Hedgehog** report of 2017 came from Oakham on January 2. On the coldest day of the winter so far, an apparently healthy hedgehog was out and about! He (or she?) was given a feed of cat food, which he scoffed and then wandered off, hopefully to a nice warm spot to go back to sleep!

A really exciting report for the new year comes from Ketton, where strange sounds have been heard!

Ann Tomlinson records: *'On Sunday night about 7 pm, I could hear strange, high-pitched piercing whistles outside. I went out to look but could see nothing. Then it stopped abruptly. I said it was either a squeaky bike (though there wasn't one around at the time) or some kind of animal, possibly long-eared owl. But actually it seemed too high-pitched for that.'*

Then yesterday evening I met our neighbour . . . , bordering the river about 200 yards down from us. She said she was out in her paddock behind the stable when the whistles were going on. She had a powerful head-torch on, and she looked down towards where the whistles were coming from, near the river bank.

*It was an adult **Otter**. Two youngsters popped up and joined her, but she kept whistling until a third popped out of the undergrowth as well. Then they disappeared towards the river again.'*

The young were quite small, so born fairly recently, which shows that breeding is still successful in the area.

Another important record was just outside Rutland, on the A664 Uppingham-Market Harborough road near the Neville Holt turn. An animal with a description which fits that of a **Polecat** was caught in the headlights. In view of the recent confirmed sightings I think it can be added to the list.

During December Jane Ball from Barrow has been using the mammal traps in her garden, and has managed to catch several species of small mammal, **Short-tailed Voles** and **Field Mice**, and a **Water Shrew** was also found. A **Stoat** crossed the garden - no doubt hoping to harvest some of the residents! The only other stoat seen this month was near the upper lake at Fort Henry at the end of November. Other small mammals seen during November and December include a **Common Shrew** on the drive at Marian Markham's home in Langham, where **House Mice** were trapped on three occasions during November. At Langham Marian continues to use the camera trap, and has recorded a **Fox** on almost every night. **Hedgehogs** are even more regular attendees, sometimes two or three seen together, and **Muntjac** and **Grey Squirrels** also put in frequent appearances. From Uppingham comes a report of a fox screaming one very early November morning, and a young hedgehog out and about on the road in early evening.

Grey squirrels are also reported from Pickworth Wood, and at Exton estate 130 were trapped or killed during November.

Two records of **Brown Hare** this month; two seen together at Fort Henry in December, and one dead in Barrow village. Wildlife has caused problems at Greetham valley golf club; a **Badger** report concerns damage done to greens and bunkers, and an otter has removed a large fish from the lake the in the valley course. Muntjac have left a track across the course towards Exton, and **Fallow deer** have left prints in bunkers. Fortunately the management are sympathetic, and

no action will be taken against them!

Other Fallow deer have been recorded at Pickworth near the wood, and at Christians Lodge, and evidence in the shape of slots found of **Roë Deer** at RWNR. Otters are also very active at RWNR, with almost every mink raft recording either spraint or footprints during November and December.

Muntjac have been seen at Wing on the Tunnel top and in the drive of the Stone House, at Gunthorpe and on the Hambleton peninsula near VTC. One also strolled across the garden of the Ball's house at Barrow

The back-up water-vole team of Anthony (Biddle) and Kayleigh Brookes in December recorded evidence of **Water Voles** at almost every rafted site at RWNR, but unfortunately found no trace at Oakham Canal. We conclude that they have once again retreated into the reed bed at the Oakham end of the canal, and hope to find them active again in the spring.

Thank you to all recorders this time: J & D Ball, A Biddle, K Brookes, C Gallimore, A Lands, P Langstone, M Markham, T Mitcham, M Quinlan, P J Rudkin, L Worrall.

BATS

RECORDER Jenny Harris

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I have not received any records of bat activity for the period, which strongly suggests that bats are, for the most part, safely tucked up in hibernation. Having said that, there was a bat dropping on my bedroom window that I am sure was not there last week! The only record has been of a male **Brown Long-eared bat** found unable to fly on the floor of a garage in Ashwell. It had a broken ankle, injuries on its back and suspected internal injuries. I believe its injuries may have been caused by an up-and-over door or roofing work where slates were being lifted. It was put down by the local vet.

Reports on RNHS Field Trips 2017

New Year Walk in Fineshade

In typically unseasonal weather, ten members met at the car park in Fineshade Wood on Sunday 8th January and enjoyed a relatively balmy temperature of 9 °C, although a little overcast at first and damp underfoot. This Northamptonshire forest is managed by Forest Enterprise, and is a remnant of an ancient woodland now rich in semi-natural native woodland as well as conifers, which is gradually being restored to site-native broadleaf woodland.

The group met with the sounds of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Coal and Great Tits. Although the number of flowering plants and shrubs is at the lowest this month, there were a few signs of what is to come with a small group of Spurge Laurel just beginning to flower. It was too early to find the male flowers of Hazel but catkins were plentiful, as were the large clusters of cones hanging from some of the conifers.

A steady walk around the track marked as the Dale Trail revealed more bird activity and snatches of song or calls from Wren, Chaffinch, Blue Tit and Nuthatch. We were also treated to the sight of a small group of around 20 Redwing. The keen-eared members picked up the faint calls of Siskin and Goldcrest together with Marsh Tit and a Tree Creeper.

A visit to the hide towards the end of the walk was completed by good views of a greater spotted woodpecker along with blue and great tits at the feeders and a Moorhen on the pond and of course the inevitable Red Kite and Buzzard.

With the odd glimpse of sun, an occasional sight of a Grey Squirrel and the unmistakable scent of an early patrolling Fox, the group had totalled 23 bird species, which considering the time of year was very satisfying.

Anthony Biddle



- January 3, 7.30 pm (VAR)** **Biodiversity – Our Natural Partner**
Chris Gerrard of *Anglian Water*.
- January 8, 10.30 am** **FINESHADE WOOD – A New Year Walk**
RNHS led, meet in car park.
- February 7, 7.30 pm (VAR)** **Dragonflies**
A talk by Mick Parfitt and Henry Curry of the *British Dragonfly Society*, Wicken Fen.
- February 12, 10.30 am** **Life on FRAMPTON MARSH (RSPB)**
Peter Scott leads this walk at 'one of the premier birding sites on the east coast', suitable clothing essential. Non-members suggested £2 donation. Meet outside Visitor Centre, PE20 1AY; TF 356 392. Queries: Peter Scott, 07535 508932.
- March 5, 10.30 am** **A walk at EYEBROOK RESERVOIR**
With Peter Scott and the *EBR Wildlife Group*. Meet in the EBR car park at the bottom of the hill from Stoke Dry. Queries: Peter Scott, 07535 508 932.
- March 7, 7.30 pm (VAR)** **AGM, followed by A Year At Ketton Quarry**
A short AGM, followed by Jenny Harris on Ketton Quarry, photos Dave Needham.
- April 4, 7.30 pm (VAR)** **The Great Fen Project**
A talk by Henry Stanier, the *Great Fen Ecology and Recording Officer*. This is one of the most important restoration projects in Europe.
- April 30, 9.30 am** **BURLEY WOOD – Springtime Walk**
Note early start time. Phil Rudkin leads. Suitable footwear needed. Bring membership card. Meet at the entrance gate on the A606, park with care on the verge. Grid ref: SK 892 093. Queries: Phil Rudkin, 01780 762998.
- May 6, 4.00 am** **Dawn Chorus at BURLEY WOOD**
With Linda and Anthony Biddle. Warm clothing, suitable footwear and membership card needed. Meet at the entrance gate on the A606, please park with care on the verge. Grid ref: SK 892 093.
Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108 / 07749 636919.
- May 21, 2.30 pm** **MERRY'S MEADOW – A Green-winged Spring meadow**
Jenny Harris, *LRWT Conservation Officer*, leads this walk at Merry's Meadow SSSI. Meet outside entrance, park on verge near gate, please do not obstruct any gateways. If distance from road is a problem, there will be a shuttle with 4WD vehicles. Wear appropriate footwear. Grid ref: SK 831 174.
Queries: Jenny Harris, 01572 755274.
- June 1, 7.00 pm** **Farm walk at BEAUMONT CHASE FARM**
A Thursday evening walk with farmers Jo and Mary Nourish (RNHS). Grid ref: SP 846 988. Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108 / 07749 636919.
- June 18, 10.00 am** **THE ALLERTON PROJECT – Farming Methods And Wildlife**
Jim Egan and Amelia Woolford from the *Allerton Project* will show us round. Maximum number on tour is 20 people, phone Linda Biddle to book. Meet at Loddington House, Main Street, Loddington, LE7 9XE. Grid ref: SK 791 024.
Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108 / 07749 636919.



- June 30, 2.00 pm** **Flowers at SEATON MEADOWS**
 Joe Costley, *Plantlife* warden, leads. From Harringworth towards Seaton, after passing under the rail viaduct, take the first right towards Morcott, park up after 200 m. Grid ref: SP 913 987.
 Queries: Jenny Harris, 01572 755274.
- July 2, 10.30 am** **Dragonflies at WICKEN FEN**
 Mick Parfitt of the *Dragonfly Project* will show us round. Entrance just before main reserve. Grid ref: TL 564 705. Lode Lane, Wicken, Ely, Cambs CB7 5XP.
 Queries: Gill Chiverton, 01780 753820.
- August 5, 10.00 am** **FINESHADE – A walk in the woods: butterflies and flowers**
 Barrie Galpin of Friends of Fineshade leads. Grid ref: SP 980 983. Parking £4.
 Queries: Richard Brown, 01780 590707.
- August 27, 10.30 am** **CLIPSHAM PARK WOOD – joint meeting with British Plant Gall Society**
 Roy Lemmon RNHS leads this walk starting at Yew Tree Avenue, Clipsham, car park. Grid ref: SK 980 169.
 Queries: Roy Lemmon, 01780 762051.
- September 6, 7.30 pm** **LYNDON RESERVE – Bats over Rutland Water**
 Jenny Harris leads this evening walk at the RW Lyndon Reserve (bring torch). Parking in Lyndon Reserve car park. Grid ref: SK 894 055.
 Queries: Jenny Harris, 01572 755274.
- October 3, 7.30 pm (VAR)** **Plantlife**
 A talk from Joe Costley of Plantlife, who showed us round the Seaton Meadow Reserve on June 30. Plantlife is responsible for many reserves in the UK and across the world.
- October 14, 2.00 pm** **BRAUNSTON-IN-RUTLAND – Lichens in churchyards**
 Ivan Pedley follows up his November 2016 lecture. Meet at Braunston-in-Rutland churchyard (grid ref: SK 833 065), then on to Brooke churchyard.
 Queries: Roy Lemmon, 01780 762051.
- October weekend 28/29** **NORTH NORFOLK wildlife**
 Two days around Titchwell, Cley, Morston Quay, and Holme. Weather permitting, includes a boat trip to see seals. Either make arrangements to stay locally overnight or come for the day, see *Fieldfare* for possible car share arrangements.
 Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108 / 07749 636919.
- November 7, 7.30 pm (VAR)** **Photographic Evening**
 A look at the entries for the RNHS calendar competition, and also other photographs/films members may wish to bring along – check with Peter Scott.
- November 17* 7.30 pm** **HAMBLETON – The Sky at Night** **(if overcast, 18 November)*
 Last year the weather foiled this event! Let's try again. Meet at the Volunteer Training Centre, Hambleton Rd. Grid ref: SK 884 084.
 Queries: Margaret Conner, 01664 454532.
- December 5, 7.30 pm (VAR)** **The Allerton Project**
 Jim Egan with Amelia Woodford on the work of the GWCT (Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust), following our field visit of 18 June.