

Wildlife

In North Lancashire 2014



33rd Annual Newsletter of the

North Lancashire

Wildlife Group

Price £2.50



Lancashire,
Manchester &
N Merseyside

North Lancashire Wildlife Group

The Group is a local group of the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & N.Merseyside, primarily for members living in the Lancaster City Council District and immediately adjacent areas of Lancashire, South Cumbria and North Yorkshire.

Meetings are open to all members of the Wildlife Trust. If you are not already a member, come along to a few meetings and, if you like what we do, join us.

The Committee coordinates all the work of the Group and, in particular, arranges meetings, field outings, recording sessions, and the production of an annual Newsletter. The Recorders receive and collate records to help conserve interesting sites, to monitor changing numbers and distribution of species and to contribute to national recording schemes.

Our events and meetings are listed on our website - www.nlwg.co.uk and also on the 'What's On' section of the of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust's website. For further information contact the Chairman, Mike Moon, E-mail mikejmoon@aol.com or telephone him on 01524 701163.

NLWG Committee 2014-15

Chairman	Mike Moon
Treasurer	Chris Workman
Minutes Secretary	Cis Brook
Newsletter Editor	Barbara Crooks
Webmaster	Martin Sherlock
Member	Linda Renshaw
Member	Pete Marsh
Member	Steve Garland

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Chairman's Report 2014

After two, rather sad years, this year has been somewhat better, indeed considerably better, starting with the weather. After a precocious start, we were blessed with a wonderful summer and autumn, and only lately has the cold weather arrived. For one, I have been very grateful for the clear nights, tracking comet Lovejoy across the early evening sky.

So we now have a new name, North Lancashire Wildlife Group, and a revamped website. But I am afraid some things do not change. Attendance at our winter meetings stays on the low side, and our committee suffers from the same problem. Yet, compared to other similar groups, we are very active and more than most so it is not all doom and gloom.

Our list of Recorders continues to grow and this year we welcome Belinda Garland who has taken over as the Dragonfly Recorder from Pete Marsh. We have consolidated the library and disposed of some of the books, but there is still a lot of good stuff available. We also have moth traps, bat detectors, specimen pots and FSC identification charts, so we are nearly fully equipped for some serious recording. The summer programme will be completed shortly.

Two members of our committee resigned in 2014 - Tony Ball as Librarian and Stefan Hobbs as Secretary. We thank them both for all the time and effort they have given to the work of the Committee and hope that they will continue to join us at our meetings. We also welcome Steve Garland onto the committee: he is already one of the Recorders and Chair of the LWT's Committee of Trustees. Any ideas for talks and walks for meetings would be welcomed; we particularly need help in publicity and spreading the word about our meetings and what we do, so please put your thinking caps on and come forward with your ideas. Better still, volunteer to take part and do look at our new website for up to date information about our events.

I wish you all, on behalf of the committee, a good spring and summer. We have our first daffodils out on The Row in Silverdale: they always make an early appearance, usually by the third week in January, but are a bit earlier this year so I will take that as a good omen.

Mike Moon

Look at our website!

www.nlwg.co.uk

Editorial

Welcome to the 2014 Newsletter, the first to be printed using our new name of the North Lancs Wildlife Group. Although we now have a new title, we have only changed one word and our contributors' interest and enthusiasm for all things in nature remains constant.

This 2014 edition contains a wealth of interesting and informative articles. Many of the contributors are well known to our readers, but this newsletter includes two new writers: - Gail Atkinson, a member who writes about her 'Hedgehog Diary', and Mike Gosling (Geologist, Botanist and Lichen expert) who has written two very interesting articles about the lichens to be found in North Lancashire.

The diversity of content which the articles provide, allows readers to pick up a newsletter and 'dip' into it, finding something of interest each time. Jim Thomas has sent in an article about his observations of the Harlequin Ladybird in 2014, Trevor and Ruth Pearce have provided interesting accounts of ferns in both their garden lawn and a Lancaster street, Anne Smith has

once again written an eloquent piece about Myers Wood and Chris Workman tells us about a Hay Meadows management course he attended in July. The Recorders once again have written informative reports and you can read about several of our monthly Field Trips which were well attended throughout the summer months.

My wholehearted thanks extend to all members who have written articles, to the Recorders who are often still busy sorting out their annual records and to the LWT staff who somehow find the time to write their reports. Thank you also to everyone who has sent in their photographs which again will be printed in colour.

Many thanks, as always, must go to Laura Sivell who does all the typesetting and layout, to the LWT for allowing us to use their printing resources, to Catherine Haddon for her help and particularly to John Russell, the volunteer who does the hard work of printing and collating.

Barbara Crooks

Conservation and Planning 2014

2014 was the year that Community Windpower finally abandoned their Claughton Windfarm scheme – huge relief all round after very many years of meetings, lengthy objection letters, thousands of planning documents and several public inquiries/appeals.

The energy focus now seems to have shifted to the Heysham Peninsula. When the Trust first started trying to acquire Heysham Moss over 20 years ago, I think no-one could have foreseen that one day it would be surrounded by energy schemes. Developments already approved include the BT wind turbine, the Banks Group Windfarm across the by-pass, the National Grid sub-station north of the old railway sidings and the recently approved Dong Walney Offshore Windfarm Project sub-station, south of the sidings. A solar array scheme is also being developed east of the Moss and a compact gas-fired power station at Middleton!

The Trust has recently met with the Head of Planning at Lancaster City Council to discuss the need for a co-ordinated approach to these diverse energy schemes and their cumulative impact on the Trust's nature reserves and local wildlife. Our objections to the Dong scheme remain unresolved, so we will see what happens as the project moves towards the delivery phase.

Another important energy-related scheme under discussion is the major upgrade of National Grid's

transmission networks across the north of England – a variety of solutions (above and below ground) have been proposed, including cabling under Morecambe Bay.

Residential planning applications have directly affected some of our nature reserves including Warton Crag & Over Kellet Pond, and objections have been submitted by Steve Ryder.

Elsewhere in Lancashire, the 2 "fracking" applications on the Fylde have occupied considerable staff time and we wait to see what the County Council decide in January 2015. We have objected to both applications on a number of points. The major gas storage development underneath the Trust's Wyre Marshes reserve is also unresolved following a Judicial Review which ordered the Secretary of State to reconsider the application (previously refused).

It was lovely to hear that Dr Jennifer Newton was the posthumous winner of the Forest of Bowland 50th Anniversary Biodiversity Award. The citation can be viewed at: http://www.forestofbowland.com/files/uploads/pdfs/fob_cs_biodiversity_dr_jennifer_newton_a4.pdf

Her knowledge and wise counsel is still very much missed.

2015 will bring a General Election on May 7th and regardless of who wins, they are almost certain to change the planning system again, so we wait to see

what transpires. We can be reasonably certain, however, that by then the “fracking” applications will have been determined locally, unless the Government dislikes the decision and calls them in. The energy schemes affecting the Heysham area are all closely tied to prevailing energy policy and subsidies, so they too may be affected post-election.

I am now seconded to manage the Fylde Sand Dunes Project 2 days a week until the end of March 2017. This is a 100% Environment Agency-funded project that delivers the soft sea defence elements of the Fylde Coastal Protection Strategy. In a nutshell, we are using a variety of techniques to grow the dunes towards the sea. Increased dune width will provide better flood

protection and we are also tackling a wide range of invasive species and historic patterns of erosion. Ecological monitoring is a key part of the Project and much time has been spent this summer by expert botanists searching for historic records of rare hybrid willow. Sadly, it would seem that *Salix x angusensis* and *S. x subsericea* have disappeared but we did find a single specimen of *S x friesiana* (Nationally Rare) on the Lytham St Anne’s Local Nature Reserve.

Kim Wisdom

Conservation Officer for North Lancashire

Reserves Reports

The North Lancashire Reserves

Heysham Nature Reserve

This year has seen the usual mix of exciting new developments and regular activities across the north Lancashire reserves.

Aside from the regular, annual management activities at Heysham, additional funding was secured to undertake remedial works on the reserve dipping pond at the start of the year. Exacerbated by a problem with the highly invasive Floating Pennywort, the pond had become completely unusable for educational activities in the last couple of years, due to thick layers of sediment and a dense mat of vegetation. With a limited budget and the problem of taking large volumes of material off site, sacrificial areas were identified within the woodland screening planting alongside Moneyclose Lane. Slurry pumps, operated by a local agricultural contractor, were used to stir up the thick sediment and pump it out of the pond onto these areas. Although the initial results looked somewhat drastic, the pond soon recovered and was able to be used again for pond dipping activities during the summer. The clarity continued to improve and submerged aquatic macrophytes have now returned.

This year also saw a new EDF Energy funded community project at Heysham, which has allowed the Trust to continue some of the excellent work that had been carried out in recent years with the Wealth of Wildlife project. Although it was originally envisaged that this year would be a pilot project demonstrating what can be achieved, it is hoped that it will be continued into future years. EDF Energy is also hoping to explore the possibility of rolling out a similar programme, using ideas developed during the project, at other stations. The Trust has put a proposal to EDF

Energy for a continuation of the project in 2015 but is currently waiting to hear the outcome.

Although confirmation of the funding was not received until February and the project officer, Eve Grayson, was not in post until April, the project made excellent progress, reaching 560 people during the year. One of the key objectives was to introduce new visitors to the reserve and it has been encouraging that many of the visits have been first time visits. Family events have become increasingly popular throughout the year, with additional sessions run for some of the latter events, due to the huge oversubscription. It has been rewarding to see local families returning to events, building connections and familiarity with the reserve. The project has also been working with the station visitor centre in order to develop links with the reserve, and initial reactions have been excellent with requests for regular future events. Credit goes to Eve for putting on an interesting and varied programme of events; let us hope this will continue in 2015.

Heysham Moss

This year was an important one for the Large Heath re-introduction project at Heysham Moss. The start of June saw the first release of the captive-bred butterflies, with the first emerging on the 7th June and the last on the 27th June. The caterpillars that had hatched out in the breeding cages at Chester Zoo in 2013, pupated early in the summer and were set on wooded rods ready for transfer back to Heysham, where they were kept in a small, emergence cage. They were transferred twice daily as they emerged out onto site at Heysham Moss, with a total of 166 released during the twenty days. A film crew from BBC North West Tonight even came out to record the event and local children from Trumacar school helped with the release of some of the adult butterflies. The emergence success from

the pupae was surprisingly high with only one failure out of 167 pupae brought up to Heysham. Adult butterflies were also recorded mating on site which was a good sign for the success of the project.

A further collection of gravid females was undertaken at Winmarleigh Moss under the licence granted from Natural England. It seems that it may have been too close to the end of the flight period and, unfortunately, little or no egg laying was observed in the breeding cages at the Zoo. After numerous discussions, it was decided to put the second phase of captive breeding on hold until next year. This will mean no further releases of adult butterflies at Heysham Moss in 2015 but an additional collection from Winmarleigh and the final release to Heysham in 2016. This will, however, enable us to monitor closely the numbers of butterflies that have successfully completed their entire life cycle on site.

Winmarleigh and Cockerham Moss

The year 2014 saw the finalisation of funding for capital works at Winmarleigh and Cockerham Moss, with a new Higher Level Stewardship agreement starting at the beginning of the year. The Trust's mossland team started drawing up the first phase of the restoration works during the spring and summer, along with the production of an Environmental Statement and felling licence application. With final confirmation of the remaining funding from the SITA Trust in late autumn and approval from the Forestry Commission for the felling works, groundwork has now started on site and will continue into the new year. The access tracks onto both Cockerham and Winmarleigh are to be upgraded to bring in machinery, tree removal is underway and bunding and ditch infill work is due to start before the end of the winter. This forms the first part of the re-wetting works that are planned over the next few years.

Access to the reserve remains restricted to the public footpath but most of the reserve's key features can all be seen from the path that crosses east to west through the middle of the site and gives an excellent sense of the reserve as a whole. As part of the local Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area (NIA) Project, the Trust received support to facilitate a programme of community

consultation in the local area. We ran a number of sessions in local village halls, engaging with neighbouring landowners and residents of Cockerham and Winmarleigh to discuss our plans for the site over the coming years.

Warton Crag

Although a very disappointing year for the key butterfly species at Warton Crag, work has continued in extending the coppice plots within Strickland Wood and opening up the ride from the edge of Westfield to the summit by the beacon. It is hoped that additional habitat will be created for species such as Pearl-bordered Fritillary, while the rides will allow more movement of some of the stronger flying species between areas of suitable habitat across the Crag. The rides will also offer habitat for other species and it was rewarding to see the new ride well used by Ringlet this year. The start of the year saw the return of a working horse to the reserve with Bekka Corrie-Close working with her horse 'Seamus' to extract some of the timber from the more difficult terrain within the newly opened-up coppice plots.

As always, much of the excellent work carried out this year would not have been possible without the many hours that all the volunteers have given up to help the Trust and, as usual, a big thank you to both our team of 'regulars' and those who have joined us this year.

Further details about the wildlife of Heysham this year are compiled in the Heysham Observatory Annual Report, available from the reserve office or from the Leighton Moss shop. A daily blog for the Heysham and Middleton area can be seen at

<http://heyshamobservatory.blogspot.co.uk/>

Reuben Neville

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Photos for this article are on page 7

Middleton Nature Reserve

The Wildlife Trust is now into the sixth year of managing this County Wildlife Site as a Nature Reserve through an agreement with Lancaster City Council. We are also approaching the halfway way point of a separate five year project working on key management objectives for the reserve.

This project enabled a baseline aquatic invertebrate survey to be undertaken in 2013, the data from which became available earlier this year. Overall, the diversity of aquatic macro invertebrates was good, with 45-75 species recorded in most water bodies surveyed, indicating high, ecological value. Species of note include: the diving beetle *Hygrotus nigrolineatus* (nationally

scarce), the mayfly *Caenis horaria*, the water boatman *Cymatia bonzdorffi*, the Black-bellied Great Diving Beetle *Dytiscus semisulcatus*, the water beetle *Helophorus griseus* and the freshwater snail *Bathyomphalus contortus* (all notable in Lancashire).

The diving beetle *Rhantus suturalis* (notable in Lancashire) was recorded from ephemeral ponds, but the specialist invertebrates associated with this habitat require further study.

Compared with last year's late spring, milder conditions this year saw Odonata emergence return to a more normal pattern, albeit with some species earlier than usual.

The first Large Red Damselfly adult was recorded on 24th April, the first Four-spotted Chaser on 13th May and the first Blue-tailed Damselfly on 14th May. There was an early first date for Black-tailed Skimmer this year, a teneral individual being photographed on 22nd May. Both Broad-bodied Chaser (one pair on 10th June) and Southern Hawker were also recorded on the reserve this year, with egg laying observed by the latter. The prolonged good weather saw Common Darter and Migrant Hawker on the wing and egg laying into late October.

Notable records for 2014 include: Barn Owl, recorded on a number of occasions during late winter; Hobby, one

recorded hunting roosting swallows on 24th Sept; Marsh Harrier, a juvenile, recorded departing the reed-bed on 3rd Sept; Little Ringed Plover, successfully breeding on the northern edge of the reserve; Wall Brown, a small number of first and second generation individuals recorded this year and Clouded Yellow, first immigrants recorded on 5th August.

Freeman's Pools

Conservation grazing of the reserve continued this year, with Redpoll cattle being used in spring and autumn to help control scrub and generate a more varied grassland sward.

Odonata records this year were encouraging, with mating or egg laying recorded by Emperor Dragonfly, Brown Hawker, Four-spotted Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer, Common Darter and Migrant Hawker. It is hoped that further groundworks will be done this coming winter to create additional open water habitat on the reserve.

Up to 5 male Sedge Warbler were recorded singing this year, with late chick provisioning also indicating possible second broods. Other notable records include wintering Water Rail and 2 Avocets which were recorded feeding along muddy pond margins in May.

Steve Ryder, North Lancs Reserves Officer

Aughton Woods Nestboxes Report for 2014

After a poor 2013, the settled weather that most of Britain & Ireland experienced in 2014 was a welcome change for nest recorders. The year started badly, with flooding experienced across much of the UK thanks to winter rainfall totals that were more than double the average for the preceding five years. However, by March, things had dried up and temperatures were a degree or two above the five-year average; the warm weather continued into late summer.

The arrival of many of our spring migrants was therefore much earlier than in 2013, as was the start of the nesting activities of migrants and resident birds alike.

Some of the older boxes were replaced at the start of the year and all 36 boxes were monitored. The occupancy was as follows:

Blue Tit – 18, Great Tit – 3, Nest Build started only – 4, Empty – 11.

It was disappointing to find the Treecreeper box unoccupied, after being successfully used in the previous two years.

The number of boxes used by Tit species was 21, which was six more than in 2013. Also, the number of eggs laid per nest was much higher, with a total of 210 eggs laid, compared with just 106 in 2013 and 145 in 2012.

Nest building and egg laying was generally around two weeks earlier than in 2013 and similar to 2012. Success rates were very good with all three of the Great Tits fledging their broods and 17 of the 18 broods of Blue Tits fledging successfully. Brood sizes were higher, ranging from 9 to 12 for Blue Tit and 8 to 10 for Great Tit.

Once again, no Pied Flycatchers appeared to be present in the wood at all this year – the species are thought to be moving into woods higher up in the local valleys.

John Mason



Dredging of the dipping pond

H.N.R



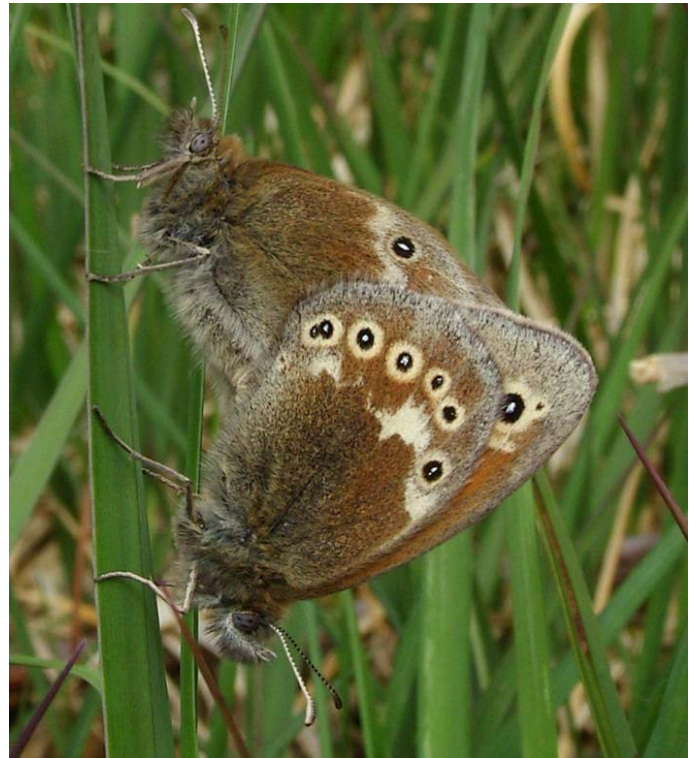
Release of Large Heath at Heysham Moss, with pupils of Trumacar School

H.N.R



The dipping pond on completion

H.N.R



Mating pair of Large Heaths

H.N.R



Adiantum from Brock Street (ferns report)

R & T Pearce



Adder's tongue fern in lawn (ferns report)

R & T Pearce

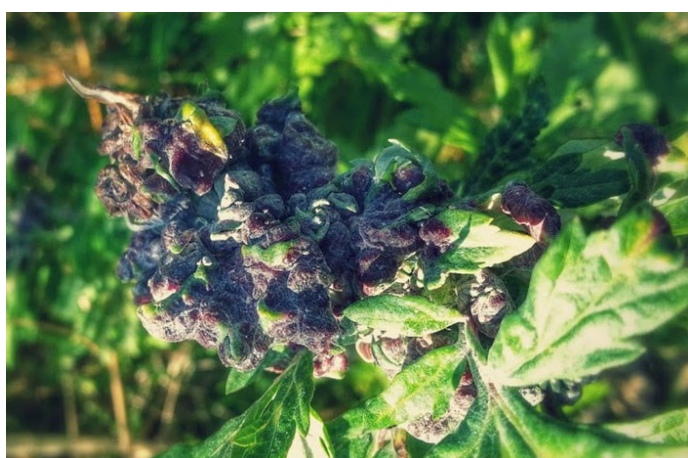


Adiantums on Brock Street wall (ferns report) R & T Pearce



Platystomos albinus

S Garland



Cryptosiphum artemisiae on mugwort

S Garland



Water ladybird

M Bloomfield



Harlequin ladybird

M Bloomfield

Recorders 2015

Herbaceous Plants, Shrubs, Trees	Martin Sherlock	01524 66131 martin@phytophile.me.uk
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Lichens, Mammals	Cis Brook	01524 752280 cissy@brookh.plus.com
Seaweeds, Algae	Roy Merritt	01524 411193 Roymerritt2@aol.com
Hoverflies	Brian Hugo	01524 854300 bribar@live.co.uk
Beetles, Woodlice, Millipedes, Centipedes, Flies et al	Steve Garland	01524 730812 steve@stevegarland.co.uk
Amphibians, Reptiles, Fish	Linda Renshaw	01524 733036
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Butterflies	Laura Sivell	0152469248 laura.sivell@mypostoffice.co.uk
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Ladybirds	Mike Bloomfield	01253 353148 michaelbloomfield36@btinternet.com

Please send in your observations and help build up a detailed knowledge of what lives where in this area so that we can:-

Conserve particularly interesting sites.

Monitor changes in numbers and distribution of species.

Add to National recording schemes (your flower/earwig may provide a new dot on a national map).

Please try to include: - recorder's name, species, grid reference with place name and date.

The A4 **NLWG recording sheet** is specially designed for this purpose. Copies from Mike Moon.

Remember that any observation may be valuable, not just the rare and unusual.

Recorders' Reports

Ferns

Maidenhair Fern in Lancaster

On a recent visit to Brock Street in Lancaster, we were able to confirm reports of the Maidenhair Fern, *Adiantum* sp., growing on a stone wall at the street corner opposite the Town Hall. To our surprise, we also found it growing in abundance high up on a south-facing, brick wall at the end of a nearby alley. Scores of plants are growing on the mortar between white ceramic-faced bricks.

Specimens sent to Dr. Fred Rumsey, of the Natural History Museum in London, have been identified as our native *Adiantum capillus-veneris*. This species occurs naturally at mainly coastal sites in this country,

on wet, calcareous cliffs, although there are inland records of plants growing on damp, sheltered walls, originating from spores of cultivated plants. A very decorative fern, *A. capillus-veneris* has long been popular with florists and horticulturists, and native populations suffered substantially from nineteenth century collectors. The species is known from very few sites in northern England.

The *Adiantum* plants on Brock St. have most likely become established from spores from one of the nearby florists' shops. Barry Attack, who first informed us of the *Adiantum* growing on the corner of Brock Street, has known of its presence there for 4 years. The abundance of plants on the white wall suggests that they colonised that site long before then and so must have survived some cold winters.

Curiously, we have not seen some common wall ferns such as Wall Rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria* and Maiden-hair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes* on the white wall. The purpose of the white wall is curious, too. Roger Frankland, of the Lancaster Civic Society, tells us that the building of which it forms part, now a children's play area, was formerly a cinema, and the white facing might have been incorporated to reflect light onto the backs of adjacent properties on Brock St.

Ruth and Trevor Pearce

See photos on 7

Adder's-tongue: an unusual lawn "weed"

When we moved house to Bolton le Sands three years ago, we were intrigued to find a patch of the Adder's-tongue fern, *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, in our front lawn. This representative of a very ancient group of ferns has a very unfernlike appearance which, along with its small size, makes it hard to detect amongst the vegetation of meadows, damp pastures, dune slacks, open woodland and heaths in which it grows. The single *Ophioglossum* shoot that grows each year consists of a leathery, oval blade that looks like a small plantain leaf without the midrib, encasing a spike that carries two rows of spore-cases. The fancied resemblance of the spike to a serpent's tongue is reflected in the English and scientific names of the plant, and led to the belief that the plant is an effective cure for snake-bite.

The plants in our lawn are abundant: we counted 280 in an area of two and a quarter square metres in April this year. Unfortunately, none have produced spikes in the

three years that we have been observing them, despite our best efforts. We avoid mowing the Adder's-tongue patch until well into the summer, when the shoots start to die down. In 2015 we will follow the advice of Edward Step (*Wayside and Woodland Ferns*) and put some plants in pots to keep them going until winter in the hope of stimulating spike production.

Robbin Moran (*The Natural History of Ferns*) has recorded the medicinal use of *Ophioglossum* in Chinese traditional medicine, in the form of adder's-tongue tea taken for "general health" and as a poultice to heal damaged skin. In Britain it has been used as an olive oil extract applied to the skin as "green oil". Drastic as harvesting the leaves might seem, the damage might be at least partly offset by the fact that the plants obtain their nourishment from mycorrhizal fungi that extend into the soil as well as from the green shoots, and also by virtue of *Ophioglossum* being one of the few ferns that bears buds on its roots as well as the stem. The very localised distribution of the Adder's-tongue on our lawn suggests that it has spread mainly vegetatively, and may even consist of a single clone.

W. J. Stockoe (*The Observer's Book of Ferns*) writes that "if the soil be moist the plant becomes so plentiful in pasture in the course of a few seasons as to cause it much injury." However, there is no evidence as far as we know that Adder's-tongue causes any significant damage to grassland today, and it is certainly a "weed" that we are happy to encourage in our lawn!

Trevor and Ruth Pearce

Photo is on pages 7 and 8

A Few Interesting Invertebrate Records

I have finally sorted out my entomology equipment and begun to record more actively. I have also begun to identify some of the insects I captured during my first year in North Lancashire.

Dead wood beetles are one of my special interests and I was delighted to find a dead, but recognisable specimen of the rare fungus beetle *Litargus connexus* under bark in Dalton Woods this autumn. It is only 2mm long and is black with attractive orange spots on its wing-cases. There is a record for this 10km square in 2003, but it is at its northern limit here. It was also exciting to beat insects out of an oak tree on Lancelot Clark Storth and to find the rather weird-looking leaf-hopper *Issus muscaeformis*. This is an extremely rare insect known

from the Silverdale area and southern Lakes, but definitely new to the Hutton Roof area. Outside our area it has only ever been found at one site near Bristol and one in Snowdonia.

Another interesting record was of an unusual gall in Lancaster. While walking through waste ground near the River Lune west of Lancaster, I noticed some strange purple 'growths' on Mugwort plants *Artemisia vulgaris* (photo on page opposite). A piece was picked and taken home and identified as the gall of an aphid *Cryptosiphum artemisiae*. When the galls were cut open, tiny aphids were found moving about inside. The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) map shows no records for the NW, although galls are not the best recorded group! However, it may well be new to Lanca-

shire; do keep your eyes open for it.

After buying the new keys to weevils, I've been trying to identify some old specimens. One proved to be quite exciting; a small chestnut-coloured weevil collected on a bicycle ride in July 2013 past Robert Hall Moor near Wennington (me on the bike - not the weevil!). This proved to be *Curculio rubidus*, possibly the first record for Lancashire, the nearest on the NBN maps being Rotherham.

Finally, while doing a check through some old photographs, I came across several of large weevils on ash logs in Latterbarrow Nature Reserve, Cumbria, in 2009. These were *Platystomos albinus*, a very rare beast. It would have been new to Cumbria had two not been found by someone the year before - also at Latterbarrow. What are the chances of that?

All in all, quite a good year!

Steve Garland

Photos with this article are on page 8

Ladybirds

There was a marked drop in the number of Ladybirds seen in the early months of the year. A dearth of aphids, the principal food source for many species, may have been to blame. The cause of the dearth is not clear but it has been suggested that the dreadfully wet winter of 2013/2014 may have affected the reproductive cycle.

On a visit to Over Kellet Pond in April, Anne Smith and I found a Water Ladybird *Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata*. This is a species with 19 (usually) black spots on either a red background on the elytra in summer or a buff/beige background in winter. A photo of one in winter colouration is included with this report.

The invasion of the Harlequin Ladybird goes on. I received 2 reports from Jim Thomas and another from Barbara Crooks. I also found one in my garden in May.

In October, I observed 5 at a location near the River Wyre where I had not seen them before. All were of the form *Harmonia axyridis (f.coccinea)*. There were also several larvae. Linda Renshaw forwarded a photo of another in the form *coccinea* but in this case some of the spots were merged. A photo of a Harlequin accompanies this report.

According to a report in The Times in October, Ladybirds have been hit by an outbreak of a fungal disease which may be transmitted either during copulation or when they huddle together during the dormant period. So far most of the victims seem to have been Harlequins in the south of England but it could easily spread to other parts of the country and affect our native species too. Researchers are appealing for sightings of the insects bearing a green fungus.

Mike Bloomfield

Photos with this article are on page 8.

Shieldbugs

The first of thirty-four records received for 2014 was Birch Shieldbug *Elasmotethus interstinctus*, seen on 12th March. Most species may be found as adults at almost any time of year with larval forms being seen only for a couple of months in the summer. Of the three exceptions, two are rare southern species but the third, Forest Bug *Pentatoma rufipes*, is seen regularly in our area, usually late July to early September.

An exciting record, unfortunately just outside our area, was a larval Blue Bug *Zicrona caerulea*, seen by Linda Renshaw on Foulshaw Moss. The adult is metallic blue but the larva has a striking pattern of red and black. It occurs alongside the larger, leaf-eating beetles in calcareous grasslands, heaths and marshes. Watch out for the larvae in June and July and keep your eyes peeled for a Lancashire record!

The highest single count was of 20 Gorse Shieldbugs *Piezodorus lituratus* on a small group of Gorse bushes in Bispham on 13th April. They are so well camouflaged, there could have been many more!

A mooch round the big Quarry car park on Warton Crag, on 8th September produced a lovely specimen of *Troilus luridus*. The bright yellow of the next-to-the-last segment of the otherwise black antenna is diagnostic.

Many thanks to all who sent in records and photos.

Anne Smith

See photos on page 13

Butterflies

2014 was another mixed year for butterflies. The winter hibernators came out quite early and enjoyed a sunny spring, but numbers were fairly low. There were good counts of Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* at Lundsfield Quarry near Carnforth, and more average numbers from the usual sites within the AONB.

High Brown Fritillaries *Argynnis adippe* were generally down in numbers again. The better flight conditions for them in 2013 had led to hopes of a revival, but the very mild, wet winter is the last thing their overwintering eggs need as they can succumb to fungi or bacteria. Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja* also had a fairly poor year, and Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne* disappointed again; the best count was of 20 on Warton Crag, but that was the only one that reached double figures.

Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*, after several years of very low counts, had a small resurgence. An interesting paper suggests their decline could be as a result of global warming; that the caterpillars (which should be the overwintering stage) are developing further than they should, and are unable to withstand winter as pupae. The small colony of Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* has persisted at Gait Barrows, but not apparently increased or spread.

White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album* had a good year, with 6 being counted at one time in Eaves Wood and other sightings at Yealand Hall Allotments. A further record from Main Street, Hornby came as a surprise and is a new site. An egg search has also

located them along the canal near Galgate from where there have been no previous records. Purple Hairstreak *Neozephyrus quercus* showed well, too – and there was the first record for many years from the oak area near Birkbank Bog.

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* had a quite poor year, with no records from Birkbank Bog; this could be due to no-one visiting, but severe over-grazing has been reported. The species appeared at the usual limestone sites.

In August, there was a flush of Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus* reports, mainly from Middleton ponds and the Lune estuary, but also at Warton Crag, Leighton Moss and Myers Allotment. It's been a good number of years since we last had such a distinct migration of Clouded Yellow here.

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus* did very well in areas it has colonised in recent years, and Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* also had a good year. Many recorders commented on the very low numbers of butterflies visiting their gardens, particularly Large White *Pieris brassicae*, Peacock *Inachis io* and Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*.

As usual, the last sightings of the year were of Red Admirals *Vanessa atalanta* which put on a good show in the very clement autumn, along with a good scattering of Comma *Polygonia c-album*.

Laura Sivell

Accompanying photo opposite

Macro Moth Report

First of all, can we please ask that you see this not just as something to read, but a guideline as to how you, as a fellow naturalist, can possibly help in a small way, especially with respect to locating larval foodplants or facilitating a moth trap (portable or using a socket) on your property or property to which you have access. This is to make a contribution to the National Macro Moth Atlas which is now in its second year of three. As can be seen below, there must surely be one or two more undiscovered species out there and, even more certainly, species with historical occurrence waiting to be relocated. Thank you very much.

This report is concerned with VC60, in particular "our" area of Lancashire which comprises the 'nine 10km squares' (SDs 45-47, 55-57, 65-67, plus the bits of land in SD35 and SD36 – in the latter case surprisingly

productive!). Nearby Cumbrian (VC69) sightings are, of course, very welcome but should be sent to Liz Still, the VC/county recorder, or Teresa Frost at Tullie House.

However, the most under-recorded 10km square in the whole of VC60 is the adjoining SD54. We urge any observers, or anyone who knows anyone who can run a moth trap from their house (or more appropriately outside socket) in SD54, which includes Oakenclough, Brock Bottoms etc. to please get in touch.

A combination of garden trappers and mobile moth-ers has led to the *extensive* recording of our area over the last 15 years or so with, for example, the generalists of the Large Yellow Underwing ilk displaying wall to wall tetrad dots and even the high altitude moorland species seemingly 'well-documented'. Then along came an *intensive*, rather than extensive, habitat/foodplant micro-site strategy, led by Brian Hancock



Forest Bug (shieldbugs)

A Smith



Clouded Yellow (Butterflies)

L Sivell



Waved Carpet (moth report)

J Holding



Hawthorn Sheild Bug(shieldbugs)

A Smith



Crescent Dart (moth report)

J Holding



Bog Bush-cricket, Foulshaw Moss, September (Orthoptera report)
M Foley



Common Groundhopper, Hutton Roof, September (Orthoptera report)
M Foley



Oak Bush-cricket, Red Scar Woods, August (Orthoptera report)
M Foley



Field Grasshopper, Brockholes, July (Orthoptera report)
M Foley



Mottled Grasshopper, Hutton Roof, October (Orthoptera report)
M Foley



Speckled Bush-cricket, Silverdale, August (Orthoptera report)
M Foley

in relation to the Pug family. This strategy, far from being a long-shot at 'wishful-thinking-species', led to even the nearest wood to my house holding an (Aspen-related) new macro moth for VC60!

2014 was an excellent year for moths and moth recording in this area. This was helped by some favourable weather conditions, allowing a wide variety of strategies to be adopted in the continuing endeavour to produce a comprehensive dataset as possible for the National Moth Atlas.

A feature of much of 2014 was suitable calm weather as soon as the action plans were formulated and the expectation/adrenalin levels still high. One of the strategies involved Brian Hancock poring over Google Earth, locating some sheltered Bilberry in a small open area of Lord's Lot Wood, then heading out there at dusk with Peter Stevens and hitting the jackpot – the first Bilberry Pug for the area and plenty of them!

Dusking – wandering around with a decent light strapped to your forehead - became a feature of the summer months. The results varied from alerting the neighbourhood watch/anti-fish-poaching team on a fruitless visit to the "Arkholme island mud-bath", to a successful location of the same target – Butterbur Moth – along the nice footpath running from Hornby Main Street along the Wenning. Thyme Pug and Netted Pug were also successfully located by Brian and his team using this strategy

It was also a very good year for diurnal searching, ranging from Mullein larvae on an old bottle dump at Middleton Nature Reserve, with one visit accompanied by two Humming-bird Hawkmoth, to moorland efforts by Barry Dyson producing the surely overlooked Beautiful Yellow Underwing for the first time in SD65. The brown-field site at Middleton was regularly searched by Justine Patton with an excellent array of micro-lepidoptera and pre-dusk, calm weather searching at Heysham Moss produced a number of Marsh Oblique-barred (with exactly the same thing happening on Austwick Moss for the neighbouring VC64 team).

Other strategies involved running overnight traps in various secluded locations, backed up by regular 'sheet and light' in the more accessible roadside sites. This brought home how much you have to micro-site for some of the more localised species. Herring Head Wood (SD66) had been subjected to a lot of sheet and light sessions in an immediately adjoining lay-by – crucially at the northern end of the wood. The mature Aspen, however, was at the south end of the wood and it was only when traps were placed under these that the first records of Lead-coloured Drab for VC60 were located.

The Lead-coloured Drab situation at Herring Head

Wood, as well as the various pug species targeted by Brian, shows how important it is to be "in amongst the larval foodplant" even for the seemingly more mobile adult stage.

Therefore this article calls on all the botanists in the area to please help, even if you do not particularly want to participate in actual moth searches. Eric Greenwood's publication is very helpful and, in Ben Smart, we are very fortunate to have an expert in larval searching with his help already leading to successful outcomes. However, we do need to micro-site decent clusters of the relevant food-plants for these potentially localised species. For example, does anyone know of any well-established areas of Broom and Juniper? If you are worried about known well-established sites for the relevant food-plants/habitats being on private land, I am sure permission can be arranged for a one-off search at the optimum time.

Graham Jones has kindly agreed to coordinate a Clearwing moth search using pheromones. The most likely species in this area is Currant Clearwing, so if you know of any allotments with long-established currant bushes, or indeed any gardens, orchards or similar habitat where there might be some bushes, please could you let me know and we can hopefully arrange a simple short one-off visit to see if they are present.

Examples of potentially under/unrecorded species where targeting the larval foodplant may produce dividends:

Currant Clearwing – well-established currant bushes.

Toadflax Pug – any colonies of Common (yellow) Toadflax away from Heysham NR which is an established known site for the moth.

Butterbur Moth – decent stands of Butterbur which are not regularly flooded out.

Pimpinel Pug – Concentrations of or long-term presence of Burnet Saxifrage.

Chamomile Shark – Concentrations of Scentless Mayweed and various chamomile species in especially coastal, brownfield or waste ground.

Plain Pug - prostrate Orache species in perhaps the same habitats as the above.

Chestnut-coloured Carpet - well-established Juniper.

Streak - well-established Broom.

Small Purple Barred - any milkwort-rich limestone grassland?

Scarce Tissue - areas of planted Barberry and cultivated *Berberis*. Successful searching for the larva in June/ July is surely feasible for the first county record?

Space precludes a full list of targets and could any botanists interested in helping out please contact me. Thanks!

What were the other highlights of 2014? The following have not already been mentioned:

The most astonishing records were both in John and Betty Holding's coastal garden at Heysham - both new for Lancashire. A Waved Carpet was never on the radar and is completely inexplicable other than the remote possibility of accidental transport or the unlikely "being blown across the Bay from Roudsea".

However, the single Crescent Dart was even more intriguing. It is a sea-cliff species and Heysham has the only major sea-cliffs in our area! This mirrors the single record of Square Spot Dart from Heysham NR in the 1990's and suggests that a regular trap as near as possible to this sea-cliff might prove productive. Unfortunately, no safe locations were found, but there are possibilities to be negotiated in nearby gardens.

Each of the local 10km squares produced a few new dots for the National Atlas. Several of these were extensions of presence in adjoining squares but there were a few unexpected records in addition to those already mentioned. One of these involved a colony of Small Argent and Sable on a footpath walked many times, but obviously not at the right time of day, at the right time of year! This is definitely a species worth looking for along early-stage or clearfell forest tracks with plenty of Heath Bedstraw. SD57 produced the largest number of new 10km square records including Northern Rustic, Anomalous, August Thorn and Satin Wave. Other significant range extensions included September Thorn in SD45, Grey Scalloped-Bar in SD67, Tissue in SD55 and Southern Wainscot in SD66. The most predictable new record was Devon Carpet in SD67 - this is now a very common moth at many damp woodland sites, notably Docker Moor in SD57.

The most important species as regards conservation designation were well-recorded and will be written up in more detail in the Lancashire Moth Group Newsletter: Graham Jones (Netted Carpet), Steve Palmer (Belted Beauty) and Justine Patton (Barred-tooth Striped).

It was not a bad year for migrants with two records suggesting successful overwintering by Dark Sword Grass, good numbers of Humming-bird Hawk-moth early in the year, a major influx of Rusty Dot Pearl and three Convolvulus Hawk-moth and single Delicate.

Whilst many of the scarce species with a very restricted known range, such as Reddish Light Arches on the eastern side of Warton Crag, made an appearance in 2014, there are several species which are giving cause for concern and were not recorded in any of VC60 in

2014. Examples are: Clouded Buff (last 2011), Northern Deep-brown Dart (last 2008), Golden-rod Brindle (2012), Garden Dart (2013), Dusky Lemon Sallow (2012), Barred Hook-tip (2013) and no-one has found a Puss Moth (or larva) since 2013. 2014 saw a single, night catch of 12 Satin Lutestring at Gaitbarrows and there may be other species occurring nearby in Cumbria just creeping unseen into our area, notably Sharp Angled Peacock. Brindled Ochre is also tantalisingly close in VC64, but last recorded here in 1887!

No mention has been made of significant numbers. It might be of interest that the largest single catch I am aware of in 2014 occurred in December, showing that, apart from the odd cold spell, mothing is a 24/7 activity! The night in question was 17th December, the location Aughton Wood in the Lune valley and the trap contained 1164 Mottled Umber, 8 Scarce Umber, 10 Winter Moth and 1 Dotted Border.

Finally, thanks to people for allowing moth trapping on private land: the Edmondson family on Heysham Head, the Gilchrists at Sunderland Point, Alan and Thelma from Lower Greenbank, Alan Middleton at Leck, the Batty family from Summersgill, Herring Head Wood and Docker Moor (thanks Raggy). Last, but by no means least, the end of an era at Millhouses with a change of circumstances preventing any further use of the garage socket. Thanks very much to Val May for ten years of superb records from this site.

Pete Marsh

Microlepidoptera

Seven new species of Micro-moth were recorded in VC60 during 2014. All were in the North Lancs Wildlife Group recording area. Predictably, most were small and obscure individuals that required dissection for confirmation. For three of the species, historic dots appear on maps but, with no further documented evidence, these are also listed.

Gelechiidae:

35.116 816 *Scrobipalpa obsoletella* (Röslerstamm) – Middleton LWT NR SD414590 ([60](#)) 30.viii.2014, male genitalia det Dr N. Rogers, conf Steve Palmer, (SMP) – Justine Patton (JP).

Elachistidae:

38.001 590 *Perittia obscurepunctella* (Staint.) – Warton Crag SD4972 ([60](#)) 23.iv.2014, first documented VC record, male genitalia det. SMP – John Girdley (JAG)

38.028 599 *Elachista alpinella* Staint. – Gait Barrows NNR SD483774 (**60**) 25.vii.2014, first documented VC record, male genitalia det. SMP – SMP.

38.033 603 *Elachista subnigrella* Dougl. – Warton Crag SD4972 (**60**) 12.vi.2014, first documented VC record, male genitalia det. SMP – B. Elliot, B. Hancock, SMP

Tortricidae:

49.190 1101 *Endothenia ustulana* (Haw.) – Gait Barrows NNR SD483774 (**60**) 25.vii.2014 female genitalia det. – SMP

49.363 1228 *Pammene argyrana* (Hübner.) – Herring Head Wood SD639687 (**60**) 3.v.2014 male – T.M.Whitaker

Crambidae:

63.079 1292 *Calamotropha paludella* (Hübner.) – Middleton LWT SD416591 (**60**) 6.vii.2014, male genitalia det. – JAG

This species is known from Southern Lancashire and this record could represent a notable range expansion. Recorders at other wetland sites, notably Leighton Moss should look out for it.

John Girdley

See photos on page 13

Hoverflies

It was not until the 4th May that I found my first hoverflies at the Lancaster Salt Ayre Tip, alongside the River Lune. It was *Volucella Pellucens*, a large black and white specimen, together with *Eristalis Tenax* and *Eristalis Pertinax*, two very common, large, black hoverflies.

Three sightings of several species in June, two sightings in July and two sightings in August were a very poor record.

In late October, two more sightings on ivy and fig plant blossom completed the year and no rarities were discovered.

I hope 2015 will produce better results.

Brian Hugo

Bush-crickets, Grasshoppers, and Groundhoppers (Orthoptera) in 2014

It has been another good year for this most interesting group of insects, but it got off to a rather slow start with adults, apparently, developing slightly later than usual. This was especially so for the bush-crickets, but maybe the slow start led to there being records as late as early November. The recording season for species other than groundhoppers is relatively short, only starting when the nymphs appear in any number around June/July and reaching a peak with the adults in August/early September. There is then a gradual tail-off in the late autumn as colder weather moves in. All the records received this year have been sent to the national Orthoptera Recording Scheme (ORS).

Bush-crickets

All six of our resident bush-crickets were either seen or heard by our small band of recorders. This year, Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* was an elusive species at its only, and very isolated, population

near Fleetwood. Allen Holmes and I paid two visits in September and whilst we picked up calls of stridulating males on the detector, we failed to actually see any adults and only managed to see one nymph. The population here is on private land and special permission is required to visit; this makes a more widespread search difficult.

Within our recording area, the Dark Bush-cricket *Pholidoptera griseoptera* is confined to Arnside Knott and especially to the warm, south-facing slopes of Heathwaite. As early as the first week in June, nymphs were found there by Linda Renshaw and later, during August, she located as many as 20 adults on her detector in just one visit. A concentrated search by AH, LR, & MF as late as the last week of September still found eight separate individuals. On Heathwaite, they favour the low-lying hazel and bramble patches and on a warm, sunny day can often be found there relatively easily. A point of some concern has been that when checking the official NBN Gateway (ORS) distribution maps for the species, they were shown as present on

the moss-lands to the north of the Kent estuary: these are undoubtedly errors for the Bog Bush-cricket and this has been pointed out to the ORS. However, it is known to be present at St Bees Head on the west coast of Cumbria and there are also two old records in need of confirmation; one near Tilberthwaite, and the other on the eastern side of Windermere.

The Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum*, being nocturnal and non-stridulating, is very difficult to record and estimate population size. Sightings are mostly made by chance when they are blown out of trees after strong winds or come to light after dark. None were recorded this year at its Arnside stronghold but I did find and photograph a female in August at Red Scar Woods near Preston - this after a little careful shaking of the lower branches of an oak.

The Bog Bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera* was frequently found this year on the northern moss-lands, and especially at Foulshaw NR. Parts of this reserve have been modified to create more wetland areas for dragonflies and this has made the cricket more difficult to locate - especially as the old boardwalk access has been removed. Despite this, there should be no threat to the population. Elsewhere, it was recorded at Meathop Moss (MR), Roudsea NNR (LR), Angerton Moss (DB), and Hay Bridge NR (LR). The more southerly localities at Cockerham/Winmarleigh Mosses appear not to have been checked this year.

Undoubtedly the most widespread and probably the most numerous of our bush-cricket is the Short-winged Conehead *Conocephalus dorsalis*. Very recently, this has been rapidly spreading north along the saltmarshes of the Morecambe Bay coast and this summer Linda Renshaw both discovered and re-discovered several populations in the Flookburgh and Plumpton areas, as well as near Heysham power-station. Current thinking is that eggs laid into the stems of sea rush and other vegetation become detached during high tides and are eventually washed ashore in a different area, allowing new populations to become established. As evidenced by their calls on the bat detector, some local populations are very strong. This is probably the easiest species to locate for anyone wishing to see a bush-cricket.

The Speckled Bush-cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima*, however, is quite the opposite, as it's bright green colouration, finely speckled with black, blends in well with the vegetation which is usually bramble or hazel saplings. Sightings at the Eaves Wood colony got off to a slow start and initially there was concern that there might be a problem, but in the end the numbers got back to normal with the last observation of any local bush-cricket being made there on November 2nd (LR). During late November, extensive scrub clearance was carried

out by National Trust staff who were unaware of the presence of the population, but this has now been brought to their attention. It is hoped that little or no damage has been done to the bush-cricket but this will need to be checked over the next few years. Alongside the approach road to Humphrey Head, Mo Richards re-found one in a section of hedgerow from where they had originally been recorded in 2006, whilst below the south side of Whitbarrow Scar, Linda Renshaw also re-found a large population behind the Lodge. At first this was thought to be a new site but later was discovered to have been recorded at the same spot in 2005 by a Mrs Oates.

Grasshoppers

A good number of records were received for Field Grasshopper *Chorthippus brunneus* which is by far the most common orthoptera within our area. Although it can occur in a wide range of colour forms it is readily identifiable by its size and its indented pronotal side plates. The unusual pink form was found at Middlebarrow by Linda Renshaw and I found and photographed two dark red ones at Brockholes N R, near Preston. This species seems to be very frequent wherever fairly open, rough, dry grassland occurs.

Defying its name, the Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus* is a less widespread species, inhabiting places where the grass is longer and lusher, but it was still recorded from several parts of the area this year.

A much smaller species is the Mottled Grasshopper *Myrmeleotettix maculatus*. Again, its pronotal side plates are indented as with the Field Grasshopper but to a greater extent. This fact, its small size, and the clubbed antennae of the males, readily help to identify it. This year, records came from Carnforth Old Iron Works, from dry open areas on Heathwaite, and from warm, exposed limestone at Hutton Roof, but it is likely to be much more widespread and under-recorded elsewhere.

Meadow Grasshopper *Chorthippus parallelus* was found by Mo Richards on acidic grassland near some tarns in the southern Lake District and by others from the raised mosses at Foulshaw, Meathop, and Rusland. In our area this appears to be restricted to two distinct habitats: upland grassland sites and acidic bogs, whereas in the south of England it is found in dry grassland, pastures, and even on partly-vegetated quarry floors.

Groundhoppers:

We have two of the three British species present within our area but records were relatively scarce this year. The only one for Slender Groundhopper *Tetrix subulata* was of a small number seen on two occasions at Brockholes NNR in late April/early May (BG). The

Common Groundhopper *Tetrix undulata* was found in dry habitats, both on Heathwaite (AH, MR) and on Hutton Roof (MF). It is also worth searching for in damp mossy areas near to water. Both species are probably very much under-recorded.

Thanks go to those who have provided records: Linda Renshaw (LR), Allen Holmes (AH), Mo Richards (MR), Pat Bromley, Barbara Crooks, Carol Poole, Linda Robinson, Bill Gregory (BG), Les Price, Derek Gallagher, and M Foley (MF). A 'Facebook Group' devoted to the Orthoptera of our area can be found by

typing 'Orthoptera of North Lancashire and south Cumbria' into the Facebook search box.

Michael Foley (December, 2014)

Editor's Note: Mike has written and produced his own excellent booklet about The Orthoptera of North Lancashire and South Cumbria. If anyone would like a copy, please contact him on 01254 248083. The paperback version is £10.00 and a hardcopy is £20.00 - all charges are made to cover costs.

Photos with this article are on page 14.

Arachnids (spiders, harvestmen, pseudoscorpions)

Having taken over as recorder for this group, I feel a little daunted in following those reports produced in the past by Jennifer Newton. I have had an interest in arachnids since my research back in the 1970's but have had little time to follow it. Now that my other (teaching) work commitments are decreasing, I am hoping to be able to devote more time to these fascinating creatures. Please send me any records you have or other observations so I can help you sort out the group.

Records from Linda have been provided regularly, all of which are helping me to develop a picture of the area's fauna. However, nothing I have been able to identify has been a new record – they are just all interesting!

Similarly, the summer field outings provided a smattering of sightings but nothing new to the sites. A male, nursery web spider *Pisaura mirabilis* was spotted in Lords Lot Wood but we were probably too early to see the characteristic domed web/tent built by the female to house her egg sac and then developing brood. Linda sent me a photo of the female carrying her egg sac in her chelicerae at Heathwaite, presumably after the area had been disturbed by some unknown activity. The visit to Heysham North Harbour wall found several jumping spiders *Salticus scenicus* sunning themselves on exposed surfaces and leaping away when approached or gently touched. The hydrostatic forces in their legs which allow them to jump so far must put them in a record book somewhere!

Chris Workman

Amphibians and Reptiles

Amphibians

Frogs *Rana temporaria* were seen mating at Middleton N.R. on the 20th January, and Brian Townson had frogspawn in his garden pond at Torrisholme on the 10th February.

Several people remarked that there was not as much frogspawn as usual in local ponds. We said this last year too. Frogspawn was seen at Lord's Lot bog, Over Kellet pond, Deepdale pond, Longfield Tarn and Heysham NR.

The Heysham N.R. ponds on the Landscape Strip and in the Nature Park are superb habitats for amphibians. One day in early August, I counted 50 Frogs in the Landscape Strip pond and 30 Frogs in the small Nature Park pond, along with 20 Toads *Bufo bufo* and 36 Smooth Newts *Triturus vulgaris* at the latter.

Toads seem to be enjoying the new sensory herb garden at the rear of the visitor centre at the RSPB Leighton Moss. At dusk, on Midsummer evenings, up to 20 were seen there, often disappearing into the gaps in the stonework beneath the flower beds. On another evening, on the 15th April, following heavy rainfall, I dodged 37 Palmate Newts *T. helveticus* and 24 Toads as I walked back along the path from the Tim Jackson hide to the visitor centre. If you are leaving the hides when the light is fading, a torch really is essential to avoid stepping on them.

Palmate Newts were also recorded at Middlebarrow Quarry and Raven's Lodge Quarry at Whitbarrow.

Good numbers of Great-crested Newts *T. cristatus* were seen at Middleton N.R. as well as a few Smooth Newts.

Reptiles

A few Common Lizards *Zootoca vivipara* were seen in May at Foulshaw Moss N.R. These were the first I had seen following last winter's extensive engineering work which created all the new pools. I didn't see many there in the summer but this was probably due to the sheer number of people going to look at the Ospreys. The boardwalk, where the Lizards like to bask in the sun, became a very busy thoroughfare.

In May, several were recorded on the wooden boards surrounding the car park in the Plain Quarry at Burton and, in August, one was sunbathing near the viewing platform at Clawthorpe N.R. This is my first Common Lizard record for this site. Barbara Crooks and Kate Harbinson saw 2 this summer while doing their butterfly transect on the LWT N.R. at Warton Crag. Later in the year, on a day out, a dozen were recorded on the boardwalk at Roudsea N.R.

Slow Worms *Anguis fragilis* are fairly common within the AONB. A couple from Silverdale stopped to chat as I was looking at the half eaten remains of a Slow Worm in Eaves Wood. They told me that they had enjoyed watching 3 Slow Worms sunbathing on their patio every

day until recently when Magpies had suddenly swooped down, killed and eaten them. David Newton also observed one on Warton Crag N.R. whilst doing the butterfly survey on the 29th April.

I received another report of a Slow Worm in a garden at Wray and a lady I spoke to recently at Keer Holme (Docker) had several living on a steep, grassy banking behind her house.

Further afield, there were good numbers at Haybridge N.R. (Cumbria) where on one occasion it was interesting to see 7 Slow Worms and 4 large Grass Snakes *Natrix natrix* sharing the same compost heap.

Locally, Grass Snakes and Adders *Vipera berus* were very thin on the ground (no pun intended) with no reports of either species. I did meet a chap who had seen one Adder at Foulshaw Moss N.R. (Cumbria again but like Haybridge N.R. well worth a visit).

All records gratefully received.

Linda Renshaw

Photo is on page 14

Fish

The River Lune had a bumper run of Sea Trout this year, but the Salmon run was dire, with numbers well down on last year's, and that was one of the worst on record. The hatchery group were struggling to collect brood stock again, and I doubt that the Lune Salmon will reach their spawning target this year (the estimated number of fish needed to spawn to sustain the run). Everyone has a theory as to what is causing the Salmon's decline but, interestingly, the rivers on the East coast of England are still maintaining their healthy stocks of Salmon.

Will the new hydro electric turbines at Forge Weir be detrimental to the River Lune's fish populations? At a time when a lot of fishery management groups are trying to remove obstacles from rivers to ease the passage of migrating fish to their spawning grounds, I personally think this is a step in the wrong direction, but we will have to wait and see.

In January, I came across the remains of a very large Sea Trout on the banks of the River Keer at Carnforth. Most of the flesh had been eaten with the skin rolled down to the neck of the tail, indicative of an otter kill. This would have been a Kelt, a fish that had spawned in the headwaters the previous November and was making its way back down the river to the sea. Unfortunately,

this superb specimen had not been able to complete its journey.

I came across an identical carcass this November, on the upper reaches of the River Keer at Docker, when I was redd counting. (Redds are troughs made in the gravel on the riverbed in which trout /salmon deposit their eggs). A hen fish this size would have contained 7,000 eggs. There was a very large, fresh redd nearby, so I hope she had spawned successfully before the Otter took her.

A friend, who has spent a lifetime involved with fisheries, told me that although there were plenty of Otters and an abundance of fish when he first started working on the rivers, he never saw a carcass that had been devoured by Otters. He thought this was because there was a plentiful supply of Eels then which Otters prefer. With the Eel population allegedly dropping to 2% of what it was 20 years ago, I think this is a very valid observation. On a brighter note, local rivers had a good run of elvers. In June, while standing on the footbridge over the River Keer at Millhead, I noticed 3 tiny flatfish (probably Flounder) swimming upstream. It is surprising how far up the river into freshwater they can travel. Flatfish are regularly seen in the pools above the M6 Bridge at Borwick. Migratory fish like

Cont on page 23



Queen wasp overwintering

J Thomas



Slow worm and grass snake (amphibians and reptiles report)
L Renshaw



Bog Asphodel (Burns Beck Moss)

P Ross



Remains of a trout eaten by an otter (fish report) L Renshaw



Burns Beck Moss trip

T & R Pearce



Emperor moth larva (Burns Beck Moss) T & R Pearce



Dryopteris carthusiana (Burns Beck Moss) T & R Pearce



Anthonia radiata (Knott End lichens) M Gosling



Xanthoria parietina & *Calopca marina* M Gosling



Mike Hall with orchids at Burns Beck Moss T & R Pearce

← Black *Verruceria maura* & *Caloplaca thallincol* M Gosling

Salmon and Sea Trout have salt secreting cells in their gills, enabling them to make the transition from saltwater to freshwater.

It was estimated that 127 Marine Conservation Zones were needed to make our offshore fisheries sustainable. To date, only 27 have been approved, so there is still a long way to go. I mistakenly thought a MCZ was a sanctuary in the sea, a total exclusion zone, a no go area for any kind of fishing. This is not so; each MSC will be assessed and a management plan will be put in place to limit any practices deemed to be harmful in that area. This will be done alongside the Common Fisheries Policy which is reviewed periodically. It's aims include the rebuilding of fish stocks by protecting

breeding grounds, stopping overfishing, reducing bycatch (catching another species other than the one you are fishing for) and phasing out discards (dead fish returned to the sea once quotas have been filled). Discards are to be phased out by 2019.

Some good sized Codling have been caught on rod and line in Morecambe Bay along with the usual Whiting and some top quality Plaice. Good numbers of Lesser Spotted Dogfish were caught in the summer from the shore at Silverdale, but Sea Bass were smaller and scarcer than usual.

Linda Renshaw

Photo on page 21.

Bird Report

First winter period

A decent selection of by no means annual wintering birds in residence, notably a Long-tailed Duck (to 12/4) and an elusive Firecrest at Leighton Moss (to 1/3), what transpired to be two Glossy Ibises in the north Fylde/Lune Estuary (contrast this with just one in the whole country in winter 2014/5), two Black Redstart at Heysham (to mid-January only) and 'inland' Scaup at Leighton Moss and Middleton NR (to 1/4). Less fortunate was a long-dead Great Northern Diver at Aldcliffe (22/1).

More traditional winter highlights seeing in the New Year included three Marsh Harrier at Leighton Moss, the returning Common Sandpiper at Conder and gangs of Guillemot, Little Gull and Kittiwake sheltering from the regularly stormy weather at Heysham Harbour/outfalls.

A mass of invertebrate-rich slurry, as a result of dredging operations on the public mere at Leighton Moss, attracted one of the two major stars of the year - an adult ROSS'S GULL (9/2). Two of the first observers had braved a stormy Heysham all morning hoping for this species, only for one to fly over their heads as they headed for a bit of afternoon hide-hugging respite along the public causeway! Also of Arctic origin was a Glaucous Gull off Morecambe (at least 13-15/2). A hybrid drake American x Eurasian Wigeon graced the Lune Estuary (from 6/2) and reappeared at Blea Tarn Reservoir (17-21/3). A Black Guillemot flew past Heysham (13/2) - back to vagrant status after a few years of a semi-resident male. A single minute of a single day, fat-ball-visiting Lesser Whitethroat at Heysham (28/2) avoided tortuous pronouncements as to origin as there were no images to pore over.

Spring passage and breeding season

Arguably, the greatest spectacle on offer at Leighton Moss is the mass departure of wintering Bittern with

attendant 'gull calling' as they circle higher and higher before heading to the south-east. The last two years have been as predictable as migration can ever be with the 'perfect evening' of light north-westerlies and clear conditions preceded by obviously unsuitable weather. Therefore, the evening of the 1/4 was the real deal, not the usual time-waster associated with this date, and involved five departing birds and a singleton which appeared to circle up before returning to the reed-bed. Subsequent activity was very low key and there was no evidence of either nesting or indeed a resident booming male - disappointing after events in 2013.

In contrast, this event was preceded by the arrival of breeding Avocet (from 19/3), the same date as the first Little Ringed Plover. Lesser Whitethroat were extremely early arrivals during east to south-east winds (from 4/4) but migrants using the western Africa/western Europe route had less favourable conditions with many warbler species not appearing in numbers until after the middle of April. Cetti's Warbler showed no sign of any population increase since 2013 and seemed limited to four territories at Leighton Moss. The main breeding event during 2014 did not really happen until mid-summer when, after a lot of displaying earlier in the season, 4-5 pairs of Little Egret raised young at Ashton Hall Lake, favoured by up to 43 roosting birds during the winter (with this roost still holding the two Glossy Ibis on and off to mid-April. The oddest "breeding" possibility was a white-morph Snow Goose paired with a Greylag on Whit Moor (at least 29/4)!

Migratory birds during this period were headed by arguably the rarest bird ever found in this area and the first summer plumaged bird ever seen in the Western Palearctic (i.e. this side of the 'pond') in the form of a summer plumaged BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT, discovered and photographed by Stuart Piner near Cockersands (Moss Lane) late in the day on 4/5. Next best, if accepted, was a Montagu's Harrier seen by two birders,

but unfortunately ignored by photographers at 'record shot' range, from the Eric Morecambe hide (26/4). In contrast, a Woodchat Shrike on the edge of Aldcliffe Marsh (8-9/5) was appreciated by several people and the abortive search after an early morning sighting on 9/5 turned up a perhaps even less likely bird in current circumstances - a Turtle Dove. A White Stork did its best to suggest authenticity as a wild bird by flying high 'in-off' at Heysham (26/3) before heading south-east and tracked at other sites. A late touch of winter was provided by the second Glaucous Gull of the year at Hest Bank (30/4). Seabird spring migration was poorly recorded this year at Heysham and other sites such as Jenny Brown's Point and the Stone Jetty. Arctic Tern passage was especially poor and contrasted rather illogically with a simultaneous, above-average, coastal Black Tern passage. Skuas were rather thin on the ground this spring - they are always a 'drip feed' product of putting many hours in - but did include a nice flock of three Pomarine which headed inland over Heysham Head (6/5). Other unusual spring passage sightings included a very high Hooded Crow (or similar hybrid) heading north over Heysham (24/3) and it is a sign of the times that single Cuckoo at both Leighton Moss and Heysham were 'notable'. A summer plumaged Black-necked Grebe at Leighton Moss (5/6) may have been a late migrant or a dispersing failed breeder.

Midsummer sightings

Characterised by an excellent breeding season for many species, beginning with record numbers of young Dunnock ringed at Heysham/Middleton. Midsummer Hobby and multiple Garganey sightings at Leighton Moss all suggested local breeding attempts. Small numbers of Crossbill were seen and heard at Docker Moor and Lord's Lot but perhaps, in this case, involving dispersal from elsewhere for this very early season breeding bird. Gadwall made their way into SD66 and on to the author's 'house list' for the first time and this complemented increase and successful breeding at Aldcliffe and Middleton NR. This period also saw the annual build-up of Mediterranean Gull at Heysham Outfalls - not as many as last year until a record number of juveniles materialised in July/August (19). Dispersing Great White Egret arrived at Leighton Moss with two on 20/7 increasing to three on 21/7 and beginning lengthy stays. July also saw the beginnings of what proved to be record numbers of young Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Blackcap ringed at Middleton and Heysham NR.

Autumn passage

A Glossy Ibis roosted overnight at Leighton Moss (5-6/8 only) - amazingly one of the final records in the whole country in the latter part of 2014 - are we in for a continuing lean spell? Presumably, the returning adult Yellow-legged Gull was seen intermittently on the Lune

Estuary and a belated breeding record of Common Tern on Conder Pool reared two young.

September saw a heron fest at Leighton Moss as the main attraction. Three Great White Egret were present throughout and there was a record roost count of 181 Little Egret (22/9). A Cattle Egret made a brief but well-documented visit (23/9) followed by a Spoonbill (24/9). Another unexpected arrival was a Common Crane (21/9) which landed briefly on Barrow scout field. Up to two Pectoral Sandpiper were the stars of an unprecedented array in front of the Lilian's Hide, as masses of mud were exposed by the low water levels. These included a Norwegian-ringed juvenile Little Stint and the nearby Eric Morecambe pool held a ringed Curlew Sandpiper from the same source. Elsewhere the capture of three dispersing Cetti's Warbler at Middleton and Heysham Nature reserves (21/9, 28/9 and 30/9) was unprecedented and the middle one of these already bore a ring attached at Wintersett Reservoir in mid-July. Bearded Tit began gathering near the grit trays at Leighton Moss near the end of the month. A group of 30 on 12/9 showed some irruptive behaviour but all remained on this occasion. However, the first significant dispersal for many years saw a male, ringed as a nestling on 14/4 and last seen at Leighton 28/9, seen 30km away on South Walney 12-17/10.

The settled weather in September saw day after day of notable visible migration and small falls of night migrants as recorded at Heysham/Middleton. Over 1,600 common migrants were ringed - unprecedented in a single month for here. For example, Robin, Chiffchaff and, perhaps most especially, Blackcap were in unprecedented numbers and visible migration included 261 Grey Wagtail throughout, 2047 Meadow Pipit (18/9), 3 Crossbill (20/9), a flock of 28 Barnacle Goose (29/9), 18 Tree Pipit (to 14/9) and a Yellow Wagtail (14/9). Good coverage of the Sunderland area also produced southbound Barnacle Goose with 21 on and 3 on 28/9 and 1200 Swallow flew south on 18/9. There were lots of noticeably late common migrants, but hours of searching failed to produce any scarcities!

In contrast, neither September nor October produced any weather which suggested we might have a "chance" of the usual seabird speciality, Leach's Petrel.

October was highlighted by a flock of three Common Crane photographed flying south over Sunderland Point and seen soon afterwards over Cockersands (12/9). Landbird sightings of interest were dominated by Yellow-browed Warbler with two at Sunderland Point (9-10/10 and 16/10), two at Heysham (15/10 & 18/10) and at least one at Leighton Moss (13/10, possibly to 17/10). A decent Siberian Chiffchaff candidate was caught at Middleton Nature reserve but unfortunately refused to call (29/10)! Black Redstart comprised a female-type at

Heysham (14/10) and an adult male at Bare (27/10).

Visible migration at Heysham/Middleton included 709 Meadow Pipit (7/10), 96 Skylark (7/10), 6205 Fieldfare, 2868 Starling and 1538 Redwing (all 31/10), a flock of 29 Whooper Swan (23/10), a high-flying, compact, southbound flock of six Bullfinch (18/10) and single Yellowhammer (16/10 & 29/10) and Snow Bunting (23/10). Other sightings included two migrant Ring Ouzel and two flocks of surprisingly late Manx Shearwater (6 on 19/10, 3 on 21/10). Leighton Moss saw a perhaps unexpected run of passage Marsh Harrier, after the local breeding birds had left, peaking at five with three of these remaining to winter.

Second winter period

This was characterised by a number of outstanding sightings in transit, but lacking in quality wintering birds which all seemed to choose the Fylde in 2014/5! The most unexpected records were a juvenile Black Tern at Heysham Power Station outfalls - the latest ever Lancashire record, a Grey Phalarope off Morecambe, a juvenile Glaucous Gull off Middleton then Heysham (11/12) and Little Auk close inshore by Heysham heliport for five minutes (12/12). A Great White Egret remained at Leighton Moss until mid-November.

The last of the autumn's six local Yellow-browed Warbler was near Sunderland Point (4/11) with the second

Siberian Chiffchaff of the autumn at nearby Heysham Nature Reserve (29/11). An injured Snow Goose of unknown provenance appeared on Colloway Marsh (from 23/11), a family party of five European White-fronted Goose was intermittent on Aldcliffe (from 12/12). The only Purple Sandpiper in the area was at Heysham. A reasonable scatter of Snow Bunting with singles at Sunderland Point (4/11), Carnforth Slag Tips (12/11), Morecambe (15-16/11) and Heysham 18/11).

Early November, as usual, produced some decent late visible migration including 2601 Fieldfare over Heysham in 90 minutes (6/11) and 1771 Fieldfare with 975 Redwing over High Tatham (1/11) but the decent vis mig recording hammered home the fact it was not going to be a vintage Brambling winter with just ones and twos seen. Just the one Waxwing was seen (Westgate on 8/12) - unsurprising given the national status in winter 2014/5. Similarly negative were the usual small influxes of Little Gulls during stormy weather at the end of the year and this may be indicating that not many are wintering in our area of the Irish Sea this winter (e.g. Shell Flat). Hopefully 2015 will liven up a bit after this unremarkable legacy from the end of 2014!

Pete Marsh

Mammals

This year I have received several detailed mammal records from Linda Renshaw and Gail Atkinson. Linda's sightings included some from Foulshaw Moss in Cumbria where, in May, she spotted the two albino Red Deer that frequent the site, hind and buck together. She also sent me a photograph of a dead Water Shrew found at Leighton Moss. Water Shrews are blackish with white underparts and generally larger than the Common Shrew. Although they are typically seen near fresh water, they can be found further afield and I have often come across them a fair distance from any water course (usually dead it has to be said). In my garden, where I have two ponds, I once observed two Water Shrews together, alerted to them by their high-pitched squeaking which carried on for some time as they skittered to and fro at the edge of the flower border. Some time ago, I found one inside my bird shed. For about a fortnight, it appeared daily at more or less the same time, always wading through the water bowl on its way across the aviary base which was at least three feet off the floor: this explained the dirty water which had been puzzling me before I spotted the culprit. These Water Shrews all seemed oblivious to my presence which enabled me to watch quite closely.

Gail has recorded several Hares locally, including fourteen she counted together, basking and grazing in the morning sun in a field near Galgate. With the good weather in late spring, I noticed more Hares continuing to bask rather than bolting, despite my proximity at times. I had a lovely encounter with a young, rangy Hare one evening; it was lolloping down towards me as I was walking up my local lane, so I froze and waited. It continued until it was right beside me, hesitated, then shot off as if it had suddenly remembered it was supposed to be scared!

Earlier this year, driving south on the A34 dual carriageway in Oxfordshire, I was staggered to count 17 dead Foxes within a few miles, as well as deer casualties. No doubt there were similar numbers on the northbound side. Last year, travelling north at dusk on a quiet evening traffic-wise, I saw a Red Kite fly up from the road just ahead of me – the A34 obviously provides rich pickings for the population of kites in that area. Seven of the local Badger records I've received were road casualties. Other species also found killed on the roads were a very dark coloured Ferret or possibly Polecat (no doubt difficult to identify in the circumstances) in Yealand and another, similar coloured one in Hale, both spotted by Linda. Gail's records

include several Hedgehog victims, so it is encouraging to read her article about the numerous Hedgehogs visiting her garden.

Linda has also recorded many instances of Badger activity. I have been watching for Badgers in my local area and, although I haven't managed to catch sight of them this year, I have found several tracks. By following their regular runs, I have been able to locate their latrines which are a considerable distance from their sett, at the perimeter of the wood they inhabit. I have read that badgers often stand on their hind legs and scratch trees when they emerge in the evening. By doing so, they could be scent marking using glands situated between their toes, or sharpening or cleaning

their claws. Perhaps they are also enjoying a good stretch! It didn't take me long to find evidence of this near the sett entrances - several scratch marks on a nearby smooth-barked tree.

Any such evidence of mammal activity - identifiable tracks, hair or molehills, is useful and although it is sad to see so many creatures killed on the road, records of any mammal, dead or alive, are valuable. So please do make a note of any sightings and send them in, however common the creature - it is often the common mammals that are overlooked in terms of recording. Please contact me if you would like a recording sheet.

Cis Brook

Field Meetings

Burns Beck Moss 13th July

Burns Beck has been a Site of Special Scientific Interest since the 1950s and was purchased by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust in 1995. It is located just off the Old Scots Road near Killington: this straight, narrow road used to be an old drovers road between Scotland and England and emanates a sense of history in this wild and quiet area. The Reserve is easily accessed from the road and there is a convenient quarry car park opposite where our group of 19 were able to safely meet. This quarry site is also used by mountain rescue teams for training purposes. At first, the weather was cloudy but gradually brightened up during the morning, creating ideal conditions for exploring the open Moss.

Mike Hall, the reserve manager, met us in the car park and gave us an introductory talk about the geological history and ecology of the site. The Reserve, covering 15.10 hectares, lies in a shallow valley formed by Burns Beck which flows north through the reserve to join the River Lune: it contains both raised and valley mires. Some 450 million years ago, during the Jurassic period, Silurian shale was laid down and later changed under intense heat to become an impermeable layer. Calcium and magnesium were leached from the shale by the Beck which was the only drainage. Ten thousand years ago, during the last ice age, glacial deposits formed the 200 feet high surrounding hills and a tarn formed in the hollow. Over time, plant matter and silt gradually leaked into the tarn, filling it with peat and sediment. As the mire built up, acidity increased and peat was cut.

Prior to 1995, alterations to the site were mainly carried out because of drainage schemes. In 1946, the Beck was straightened and dug to a depth of 5 feet and, in 1976, deep drains were dug in a herring bone pattern so

that trees could be planted; fortunately the work was never carried out. The Trust reversed the drainage systems and installed a large number of dams to maintain the water levels. All these changes created a range of habitats for different plant communities: a wet meadow or tall herb fen area, an area of deep peat at the sides of the Moss and then an area of reed bed and willow carr. Mike said that the area is, in effect, a flood plain and after a lot of rain the reserve becomes inaccessible, particularly so in winter.

Mike led us in single file along the way-marked grassy paths through the area of wet meadow: the pathway was replaced by boardwalks over the wetter areas. He pointed out the enormous number of plants growing in the reserve compared to the surrounding fields which were subject to spraying and grazing. No spraying was allowed within 50 yards of the Reserve.

Growing alongside the pathway were Marsh Violets *Viola palustris* and the elegant and prolific Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*. The former is the larval food plant of the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, whilst the latter is the larval plant for the Ringlet Butterfly. The SPB was past its peak flying time, although one or two worn specimens were seen, but the Ringlet was flying in good numbers. Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre* grew in its white, pink and purple forms alongside Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, but the striking Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* had unfortunately faded. As well as Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, Mike pointed out Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* which he said had first been identified on the Reserve by Jennifer Newton. He showed us how it differs from Marsh Bedstraw *Galium palustre*, also growing there, in having backward-pointing prickles along its flower stems, whereas the stems of Marsh Bedstraw are hairless.

Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Marsh Ragwort *Senecio aquaticus* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* were noted. Mike told us how Meadowsweet used to be known as Spirea and, because of its properties, had influenced the name aspirin.

We came to the area of boardwalk where the old course of the Beck had run and Mike spoke about the different species of Sphagnum Moss which thrive in the Reserve. Nineteen of the 37 species of Sphagnum can be found here and he pointed out two of them - *Sphagnum Palustra* and *Sphagnum Fimbriatum* (hairy top). Sharp flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and Branched Burr-Reed *Sparganium erectum* also grew here.

We crossed the bridge over the Beck where Linda fed Sticklebacks and Minnows with breadcrumbs: Mike said that small Brown Trout was also found there. Crossing the bridge, we ventured a little way into the more scrubby area of the northern mire, smelling the lovely fragrance of Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale* and finding Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* and Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus*. Mike showed us one of the, now obsolete, measuring tools which had been used to measure the water levels in the Moss. This consisted mainly of a plastic bottle filled with sand which rested on the water, and some plastic piping. All was encased in a small brick structure which he maintained on the reserve despite more scientific methods now being used.

As we walked back over the bridge, an observant person spotted a handsome Emperor Moth caterpillar on Meadowsweet, thought to be in the fifth instar. We walked upstream to continue our circuit of the Reserve, seeing a great variety of flowers including Yellow Rattle *Rhianthus minor*, Ragged Robin *Lynis floscuculi*, Yellow and Purple Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris* and Hempnettle *Galeopsis* sp.

We came to one of the 3 dams which had been put in by the Trust after 1994 to help to stabilise and raise the water level. Yellow Water-lilies *Nuphar lutea* were growing in the Beck above the dam and were much

admired. Narrow Buckler Fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* was studied and Mike showed us Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris* which is much taller than the common version. We continued on past Common reed *Phragmites australis*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and onto an area of heath land which rose gradually from the flood plain. Here were Wavy Hair Grass *Agrostis Stolonifera*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetrix* and Heath Woodrush *Luzula multiflora*.

In the now, strong sunshine, Meadow Brown, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell and Large White butterflies flew and the moths Six-spot Burnet and Silver Y were spotted. The entomologists in the group used their nets to find Dot Moth, Yarrow Plume and Common carpet. Several species of Hoverfly - the Drone fly *Eristalis tenax*, *E. Arbustorum* and *Syrirta pipiens* were caught, and Soldier Beetles *Rhagonycha fulva* were numerous; a Caddis fly *Limnephilus marmoratus* was identified.

Walking past Eared Willow *Salix aurita* and on to the far side of the reserve, Mike took us to see the many small groups of Common Spotted *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and Heath Spotted Orchids *D. maculata*. Mike said that the latter were most probably hybrids and that it was necessary to send them away to experts for identification.

We turned north heading back to the quarry for lunch and Mike stopped to show us an example of a choke disease on a grass. It was a type of cup fungus *Epichloe taphrina* which damages the flowers enclosed within the grass. He said that it only seemed to grow in that particular spot in the Reserve; he had never seen it elsewhere. There were plenty of Small Skippers flying along this grassy track leading us back to the entrance gate, no doubt attracted by the plants of Greater Birds Foot Trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*.

We all thanked Mike for a showing us this wonderful Reserve which is so rich in habitat and species and many of us expressed a wish to return again.

Barbara Crooks

Photos are on page 21 and 22.

Cryptic Quiz - compiled by Mike Moon

Answers

1) Red Admiral 2) Dung Beetle 3) Water Vole 4) Natterer's Bat 5) Ladybird 6) Pike 7) Crocus 8) Wheatear 9) Shoveller 10) Bull 11) Bank Vole 12) Goldeneye 13) Starfish 14) Toadstool 15) Grouse 16) Tiger Moth 17) Millers Thumb 18) Bull Head 19) Fritillary 20) Lady's Slipper Orchid 21) Kittiwake 22) Seals 23) Acarology 24) Limestone 25) Hen Harrier

Lichens and Mosses on the Knott End Circuit Field Meeting, August 8th

On 8th of August, I joined the North Lancashire Naturalists Group on a circuit from Knott End, along the Wyre estuary and then returning across the fields and golf course.

The first part of the walk was along the estuary, a rather untidy habitat of slumping, clay cliffs and collapsing sea defences. The classic lichen zonation on our coasts has black lichens near sea level, then an orange zone and a zone of white lichens furthest from the sea. On beach boulders, the black zone was seen as black, tar like crusts of *Verrucaria Maura*; a lichen happy to be submerged twice a day and subjected to drying out twice a day. This is just one example of the adaptability of lichens which have evolved to live in unlikely places. In Lancashire, I have found them on tractors, rabbit droppings, plastic, rubber dustbin lids, rusting metal and bone. Above the beach, concrete blocks had patches of the orange zone with two species of *Caloplaca*. One was *Caloplaca marina*, an orange stain with orange fruits and very common around our coasts in the splash zone. As we sauntered southwards another marine species was found, *Caloplaca thallicola*, an elegant, orange lichen with radiating lobes around 4-5 cm. in diameter. This lichen needs a stable, hard substrate and is frequent on the limestones around Arnside. As we walked onwards, the crumbling sea defences yielded a few other species but this is a poor lichen site. A similar habitat with more lichens and mosses is Cockersands Abbey on the Lune estuary which has a nice selection of maritime species.

Eventually, we reached the end of the estuary stretch and a tree was spotted! On this Hawthorn, the grey-green leafy species *Parmelia sulcata* and *Hypotrachyna revoluta* were the main lichens together with *Arthonia radiata*, *Opegrapha atra* and *Physcia* spp. on twigs and branches. In shaded trunk recesses, the very common blue-green powdery *Lepraria incana* was found. This tree supported only 8 species. For comparison, in nice old, unpolluted woodland, one might find over 40 different lichens on a single tree. In other parts of Lancashire, a 'good' tree might have 15 lichens growing on it. The Oak, outside the Highwayman Pub at Tunstall, now sadly lost, had 16 species, making it an exceptional tree.

Our route next took us inland, across open fields and the Knott End Golf Course. The road here is lined with trees, Oak, Ash, Elm, Hazel and Pine. These trees have a reasonable covering of lichens together with a few mosses and liverworts. The trunks of these trees are orange and grey, a common site in Britain indicating lichens that like nutrient enrichment. This comes from the chemicals in car fumes, agricultural fertilisers,

livestock and perching birds. These drift onto trees and may kill some species but encourage others.

Despite the considerable risk to life from flying golf balls, I examined the trees and found around 16 species. The dominant orange lichen is the large, leafy *Xanthoria parietina*, one of our commonest lichens seen on many bird perching sites and around farms. The other yellow/orange species included *Candelaria concolor* with its tiny, flat lobes. This lichen was uncommon in Lancashire 20 years ago; now you can find it on thousands of trees and if you see extensive yellow patches on roadside trees it is likely to be this species. The grey patches on trunks were a mixture of the common '*Physcias*', *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Physcia adscendens*, and *Physcia tenella*. One tree had the only fruiticose (shrubby) lichen seen on the day, *Ramalina farinacea* which hangs down like a piece of shredded rope. With diligent searching, I found a single thallus of *Parmotrema perlatum* a distinctive grey, leafy lichen with crisped lobes. This is a pollution sensitive species, once rare in the county, now on the increase and sometimes forming a spectacular sight well into our town centres. On Barton Rd. in Lancaster there is a fantastic display of this species together with other, once uncommon, lichens. Some lichens are so well developed you can even see *Candelaria* and *Parmotrema* on Google Street View!

These trees also yielded the first significant bryophytes. They were all common plants including the ubiquitous *Hypnum cupressiforme* growing in this sheltered site with higher humidity. Also present was the liverwort *Frullania dilatata* forming dark brown patches and well worth looking at with your lens, its leaves are in folded pairs with one leaf, helmet shaped, containing a water globule and microscopic organisms.

The final stretch took us past Hackinsall Hall (with some interesting flowering plants in the yard) and then back to the car park. Before leaving, I looked at the chippings in the concrete wall and spied thousands of minute, black fruits. Back home, microscopic examination revealed *Catillaria chaybeia* var. *chalybeia* bringing the lichen total for the day to 36. The bryophyte total was much less at a mere 6 species. All in all, not the best lichen location in the county but still interesting, and I did get to see the Rock Sea-Lavender.

List of all species seen.

MOSESSES

Bryum bicolor

Grimmia pulvinata

Hypnum cupressiforme var. *cupressiforme*

Kindbergia praelonga

LIVERWORTS	<i>Catillaria chalybeia</i> var.	<i>Opegrapha atra</i> .	<i>Verrucaria nigrescens</i>
<i>Frullania dilitata</i>	<i>chalybeia</i>	<i>Parmelia sulcata</i>	<i>Xanthoria calcicola</i>
<i>Marchantia polymorpha</i>	<i>Cliostomum griffithii</i>	<i>Parmotrema perlata</i>	<i>Xanthoria parietina</i> .
	<i>Collema crispum</i>	<i>Phaeophyscia orbicularis</i>	<i>Xanthoria polycarpa</i>
LICHENS	<i>Hypotrachyna revolute</i>	<i>Physcia adscendens</i>	
<i>Arthonia radiata</i>	<i>Lecanora chlarotera</i>	<i>Physcia caesia</i>	Mike Gosling
<i>Caloplaca citrina</i>	<i>Lecanora dispersa</i>	<i>Physcia tenella</i>	
<i>Caloplaca flavescens</i>	<i>Lecanora helicopsis</i>	<i>Porina aenea</i>	Photos are on pages 22
<i>Caloplaca marina</i>	<i>Lecanora muralis</i>	<i>Protoblastenia rupestris</i>	and 31
<i>Caloplaca saxicola</i>	<i>Lecidella elaeochroma</i>	<i>Punctelia subrudecta</i>	
<i>Caloplaca thallincola</i>	<i>Lecidella stigmatea</i>	<i>Ramalina farinacea</i>	
<i>Candelaria concolor</i>	<i>Lepraria incana</i>	<i>Verrucaria maura</i>	
<i>Candelariella reflexa</i>	<i>Melanelixia glabratula</i>		

The Fairfield Association

The Fairfield Association is an interesting example of how an organisation can evolve over time. It was started in 1996 in order to oppose a housing development but has now moved very much into land management. The emphasis has shifted from local amenity to nature conservation – which is where the North Lancashire Wildlife Group comes in. Fairfield, for those who don't know (and the name doesn't appear on any map I know of), is the street area off Westbourne Road, just west of the railway line. The land the Association leases is 54 acres (22 ha) between Abraham Heights and Aldcliffe Road.

The Association has raised astonishing amounts of money from local people, but also from Natural England and the National Lottery. One of the conditions for this funding is targets for nature improvement. Various surveys have been undertaken, both by members of the wildlife Group and others to see what is there and how it is changing.

There are three main areas which we have surveyed. The Hay Meadow is part of the 2011/12 acquisition known as “Fauna”. It can be seen from the new path from the end of Cromwell Road, running down to Lucy Brook. It is being managed as the name implies - the vegetation is mown once a year in the summer and the mowings removed. This reduces the fertility and in time should lead to an increase in plant diversity. The Association are helping the process along with a little gardening: removing the ragwort which was formerly rampant and sowing seeds.

I did a quadrat survey of the plants in the Hay Meadow in May. There was a wide variety of grasses, with none dominant, suggesting that the field hasn't been re-seeded. There were also a fair number of typical weeds of cultivated ground everywhere like Plantain *Plantago*

lanceolata and Daisy *Bellis perennis* – these should decline with hay meadow management. Yellow-rattle *Rhinathus minor* has been sown to try to weaken the more vigorous plants – it's a hemiparasite that attaches to the roots – this was flourishing. There are already a few classic hay-meadow species like Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris* and Lady's-Smock *Cardamine pratense*. One area of the field is very wet and here there the likes of Marsh Horsetail *Equisetum palustre*, Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* and Lady fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, which are not really typical either of pasture or meadow.

The second area surveyed is now known as Flora Field, extending from the Long Pads public footpath to Aldcliffe Road, beyond the houses. Management of Flora Field only began in 2014 when it was ploughed. All the fields in this area have, for many a long year, only seen livestock grazing, but this field was arable once as evidenced by the visible strip lynchets. Now, it is to be arable again. In 2014, the crop was Triticale, a hybrid of wheat and rye, grown as fodder for livestock. There are rough unploughed margins and margins that have been ploughed and seeded with a varied mixture of plants. Some of the seed mixture was “bird-friendly” and some “bee-friendly”.

I had a look at the field margins in June. I would say that the seed mixtures hadn't done very well, except for two species: *Phacelia tanacetifolia* (sorry no English name) and fodder Radish *Raphanus sativus* – the latter was rampant and will surely sow itself for some years to come. Other than that, the plants were mainly perennial grasses and other leftovers from the previous vegetation like Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. No sign of any arable weeds yet.

The group also held a bio-blitz here in June looking for invertebrates. Here, we concentrated on the “beetle banks”, areas left unploughed in the middle of the field.

Beetles were indeed encountered, like the black ground beetle *Pterostichis nigrita*, the seven-spot ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata* and the devil's coach-horse *Staphylinus olens*, but nothing at all unusual. This applied equally to the other creatures we saw, like the Speckled Wood butterfly *Pararge aegeria*, the rough woodlouse *Porcellio scaber*, or the slug *Deroceras reticulatum*.

At one end of Flora Field, on a low hill, is Pony Wood. This is more of a clump of trees than a wood, but more trees have been planted to extend it so, in future decades, there may be real woodland conditions in the middle. All the existing trees seem to have been planted in the nineteenth century but there is a significant population of native Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* which would suggest that in the past there was more extensive and more natural woodland. The

only other woodland plant I noticed in the spring was Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* but that grows in gardens too. The herbaceous plants are dominated by Nettle *Urtica dioica*. The bio-blitz visited this area too but found little. The only things we identified to species were an earwig *Forficula auriculata* and the shiny woodlouse *Oniscus asellus*. Other parts of the site have more interesting insects. On a visit in the summer, we saw the dragonflies Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* and Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* in a wet area near the public footpath.

Martin Sherlock

Miscellany

Observations on the Harlequin Ladybird ***Harmonia axyridis* (Pallas)**

The Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* was first found in the U.K. on 19th September 2004 in Essex. The beetle is native to Asia and was introduced to America and Europe in order to control aphid species before its accidental, though expected, arrival in England. It has been described as the most invasive ladybird species on earth and, as predicted, has spread very rapidly throughout Britain. Though attractive in appearance, its arrival was regarded with horror as it was seen as a threat to native species, both directly as a predator upon them and indirectly as a competitor for their food such as aphids. It is generally easy to identify because of its comparatively large size, though it does have a variety of colour patterns.

The first comments, following its arrival in this country, stated that it was most likely to be found on deciduous trees such as Lime and Sycamore throughout the summer months and that it was likely to overwinter inside buildings, including houses, as well as in cracks and crevices and under bark outside. In my experience, it is just as likely to occur on herbaceous plants such as nettles and thistles as well as on shrubs and bushes and is still far more common in the south of England than in the north. A glance at the NBN Gateway distribution map bears this out, showing that the species has been recorded in virtually every English 10km square south of mid Lancashire, though less frequently observed in northern England, Wales and Scotland. What cannot be deduced from the map is the relative abundance of the species, as a record of a single beetle from one locality

appears the same as large numbers of individuals from several localities within a given square.

The first specimen that I saw had been collected in Devon in 2006. Since then I have seen it frequently myself in many places in England. There were several in Park Wood near Stevenage (TL 295 156), on a garden fence in Harvington near Evesham (SP 058 488), on a post at Tatton Hall in Cheshire (SJ 742 816), large numbers dead in a classroom at Assington, Suffolk (TL 936 369), on Holly in a car park at Bilston (SO 948 964) and on a house wall in Moxley (SO 967 969) both in the West Midlands and on holly by a country lane near the Menwith "golf balls" in Yorkshire (SE 237 567). I have seen large numbers on garden rose beds in public places such as Kew Gardens (TQ 186 769), Fenton House in Hampstead (TQ 263 861) and Hampton Court Palace (TQ 157 683) and on Willow and other shrubs at the London Wetlands Centre (TQ 227 772). I have recorded them frequently in France including on Yellow flag *Iris pseudacoris* alongside the Marne Canal in the village of Froncles during July, when the immature stages were very common.

In recent years the number of sightings in the north west has increased since it was first recorded in a garden in Lancaster, on Buddleia, in April 2007. This specimen was of the colour form known as *conspicua* with well-marked red and black eye-spots on its elytra. The second known occurrence in north Lancashire was in January 2011, in my garden in Borwick (SD 525 730), of the form known as *succinea*. Since then, there have been regular sighting in north Lancashire and in Cumbria, often in the spring when the adults are actively



Physcia tenella (Knott End lichens)

M Gosling



Xanthoria polycarpa (Knott End lichens)

M Gosling



Parmotrema perlatum (Knott End lichens)

M Gosling



Microscopic view of leaf of *Frullania dilatata*

Mike Gosling



Lecidella elaeochroma (Knott End lichens)

M Gosling



Harlequin ladybirds (Miscellany)

J Thomas

Common and interesting Lancashire Lichens

All photos by M Gosling

Lichens on trees: Lancaster Suburbs



Parmotrema perlatum



Flavoparmelia caperata



Punctelia subrudecta

Lichens on rocks: Limestones at Silverdale, Jenny Brown's Point.



Aspicilia calcarea



Collema auriforme



Squamarina cartilaginea

Lichens of acid moorland: Clougha east of Lancaster.



Cladonia floerkeana



Cladonia portentosa



Parmelia saxatilis



Centipede 15mm, Heysham Bath (Miscellany)

J Holding



Examining mechanically gathered wildflower seed

C Workman

emerging from over-wintering sites or the autumn when they are seeking them. One of the more interesting records was obtained whilst watching an antiques programme on T.V. when the cast visited Hill Top in Sawrey (SD 370 955) and I noticed in one of the shots that there were two harlequins *in cop* on a gate in the garden!

Over the last twelve months, I have found two adults, both of the form *succinea*, one on a wall in my garden in October 2013 just after cutting back a nearby evergreen bush (in which it had probably been sheltering) and the other on the outside of the garage wall at the end of March 2014, no doubt having just emerged from its over-wintering site. On 4th December 2014, my wife discovered two more specimens of the same colour form in the corner formed between the wall and ceiling in our kitchen (and blamed me for bringing them into the house!).

Another single *succinea* specimen was noted on a tree stump in warm sunshine at Ashlea Cottage Nurseries, Bilsborrow (SD 495 398) on 3rd March 2014.

On 26th September 2014, on a bright, sunny morning, I spotted numerous, very active adults and larvae as well as pupae on the trunk of a large Sycamore tree in Winckley Park, Preston (SD 538 291). The different colour forms included *succinea* and *conspicua*. When I revisited the park on 29th November at about 10.30 on an equally bright and sunny morning, there were numerous adults and pupae but no larvae so far as I could tell. There were more on other trees in the park but mostly on the Sycamores. (I also noticed an adult

Green Shieldbug *Palomena prasina* already in brown, over-wintering colour on one of the Sycamores). When I returned later, when the sun had gone, there was no sign of any adults though the pupae were still there. Because of the shortage of aphids at this time of year, these late larvae frequently resort to cannibalism, feeding on smaller larvae.

Similarly, on 5th November 2014 at about midday and in bright warm sunshine, there were large numbers of adults, of different colour forms, pupae and larvae on a wooden fence adjacent to the car park of The Toby Carvery in Morecambe (G.R.: SD 451 636). The adults in particular were very active. It was noticeable that they were more common on the sections of fence just below the trees rather than the sections away from them.

I was recently informed of three adults that were seen on 7th November 2014 in a garden at Kents Bank, near Grange-over-Sands in Cumbria (G.R.: SD 396 758). One was floating on a leaf in a water butt, another was on a chilli plant that had numerous white flies on it and the third was actually inside a car, suggesting that the insects concerned were quite active in seeking over-wintering sites. All three were of the *succinea* colour form.

My limited observations suggest that Harlequins may be more frequent in synanthropic situations in our area and that the form *succinea* is most frequently encountered.

Jim Thomas

Photo on page 31

Hedgehog Diary 2014

April 5th: great! A Hedgehog in my Lancaster garden, and then a week later I saw it again. Or did I? How do I know it's the same Hedgehog? I didn't, so I decided to put a blob of red nail varnish on the one I could then see. In four weeks I had marked four Hedgehogs: - red, blue, white and green.

Throughout **May**, my main visitor was the red Hedgehog but coming second was the white one. Within the month of May, I gained two more hedgehogs, so they were marked with silver and peach.

In **June**, my most frequent visitor was the white Hedgehog, with the red and silver ones only coming (or me seeing them) a couple of times. Within June, I also marked another Hedgehog yellow.

During the first week of **July**, I saw mainly yellow, peach and white. From the second week, the red Hedgehog

was back which was like seeing an old friend return. He or she was very regular throughout July, along with another that I'd marked yellow and white. Also in July, I marked yet another newcomer lime green.

On **August 5th** I marked a smaller Hedgehog with an orange blob: - this one visited almost every night with the yellow and white one following almost as much, and an odd visit from the lime green and red ones.

In **September**, the smaller, orange Hedgehog came every night. At first it would sit on top of a tray that was slightly swinging off the ground, but after a couple of weeks it just walked round the tray like all the others. On the 14th, I marked a newcomer with pale blue – this one became a regular visitor.

A neighbour was very excited when she heard about my little visitors, so she started to put out food as well. I soon found that my small, orange Hedgehog had an added colour: it was now orange and red! My

neighbour excitedly came round to tell me that she had marked a Hedgehog red and it was hers. I politely told her she needed her glasses on.

All the Hedgehogs I had visiting my garden have drifted away one by one. I was left in **October** with just the pale blue one coming - well, that's the only one I saw! October 27th was the last time I saw a Hedgehog in my garden.

I do know that my neighbour said she was getting different Hedgehogs in her garden with none of my markings; I'm hoping she was wearing her glasses! Her husband made a hedgehog box and surprise, surprise, the day after he put it behind their greenhouse, there inside, fast asleep was a HEDGEHOG. Can't wait until 2015 after hibernation!

Gail Atkinson

The Wood - a progress report on Myers Allotment, a Butterfly Conservation Nature Reserve in Silverdale.

Returning in early October 2013, I find the trees still in full leaf. Mistle Thrushes exchange noisy calls as I enter and small birds vanish into the dense undergrowth. The noise of a distant chainsaw competes with the bellowing of the Red Deer stags in the valley as the rutting season gets underway.

The first coppice coupe was enclosed two years ago and the stools have now produced over six feet of new growth. Unfortunately, this has proved attractive to the three cows on site. Instead of grazing the seedling Ash and Brambles, they have broken in and munched the succulent shoots. The netting needs mending and a dead hedge of brash around the base of the coupe will hopefully deter further incursions.

Last year's dead hedges have been enthusiastically adopted by small mammals. Surveys have revealed that good numbers of Wood Mice and Bank Voles are using them as well as the Robins, Dunnocks, Wrens and other small birds which I see diving into them for cover.

By November, Green Woodpeckers have replaced the Mistle Thrushes near the gate but the woodland floor still looks more like Spring than late Autumn, with Violets, Strawberry, Cinquefoil and even Harebells flowering along the widened rides.

In the more shaded areas, a striking seasonal display of fungi can be seen. Fly agaric and a wide range of Boletes and Russulas appear through the leaf litter as if by magic, and the plentiful dead wood boasts a fine variety of Crusts, Cups, Spindles, Brackets and Jellies while greasy Waxcaps bring a splash of colour to the grassy meadows.

The area used to have a lot of Juniper but this has mostly disappeared and only a few non-fruiting bushes are to be seen. For thousands of years people have made use of almost every part of this plant. Since the end of the last ice-age, it has been valued for its dense

timber, its pliable branches for basket work, its thin twigs for smoking and curing food and for the medicinal and antiseptic properties of its oil. Happily, after some recent thinning of Hazel and Ash, a previously hidden Juniper has been found bearing the berry-like cones.

At the top of the hill, in the darkest part of the wood, the trees had grown tall competing for the light. Fewer flowers grew there and it had a gloomy feel. While creating a new coppice coupe in the area, a wonderful discovery was made. Not only had the trees grown tall but magnificent wild Clematis soared over thirty feet up into the branches. How I wish I had looked up when it was in flower - a treat for next year.

This area also provided the closest encounter with a Roe Deer so far. She looked up at us, thought for a minute then continued browsing, looked again, moved a bit nearer, browsed again. After a while, as we sat eating our lunch, she strolled slowly past, not ten yards away.

Thankfully, the wood did not suffer any damage in the winter storms. A few low branches, already dead, dropped from the old, large Oaks and now lie where they fell, still providing a nursery for countless insect larvae including those of the spectacular Longhorn beetles which will emerge in the Spring.

The nest boxes, which were put up last March were well used with over half of them being occupied by Blue Tits, Great Tits and Nuthatches. This year a variety of larger boxes have been introduced including two Owl boxes, several Green and Greater-spotted Woodpecker boxes and a Kestrel box in addition to some more boxes for small birds.

Despite the wet winter there have been some magical days. One cloudy day in January, the light was beginning to fade when suddenly the clouds parted leaving the hills in shadow and allowing the setting sun to shine along the reed-bed in the valley. The water glowed like molten metal flowing from a furnace.

So don't just visit in summer for the Butterflies, Myers Allotment has lots of winter wonders as well.

Anne Smith

Lichen Highlights of North Lancashire

The lichens are a remarkable group of organisms, not plants but fungi, with a unique combination of fungus and alga and/or cyanobacterium. This combination results in an organism with a distinctive range of morphologies, reproductive strategies, chemical products and an ability to colonise a vast range of habitats. Any organism that can live inside an Antarctic rock, on stained glass window panes, on the back of the Galapagos Giant Tortoise and in the crevices of your car demands our attention and must surely be fascinating to study.

In their flora of 1907, Wheldon and Wilson record 302 taxa in V.C. 60. with 262 of these in the north and east of our area. In the vice county today, the total is around 487 and my research has turned up a number of national rarities and, in some locations, well developed communities that equal those in lichen hotspots throughout the country. In Lancashire, lichen numbers and diversity increases as you go northwards with the real highlights around Arnside, Silverdale, Ease Gill, Tarnbrook and Clougha.

Lichens on trees

Lancashire is one of the least wooded counties in Britain; only about 3% of the county is wooded compared with a national average of 9%. There are a range of tree habitats in North Lancashire: two that have a distinctive flora are the ancient, semi-natural woods around Silverdale (Gait Barrows, Eaves Wood, Thrang Coppice, Grisedale Wood, Strickland Wood and Fleagarth Wood) and the urban roadside trees in Lancaster, Blackpool, Preston and other towns.

In the ancient woods are lichens that need ecological continuity, low levels of SO₂ (Sulphur Dioxide) and other atmospheric pollutants. In Lancashire, a search of shaded trees will reveal thin, green/brown thallus of *Enterographa crassa* but few other old woodland indicators.

In the extreme north east, the remote Ease Gill does not look like a good place to look for lichens on trees. However, in the gorge sections are Ash trees that, despite not being ancient, have some ecological continuity and have a relict flora of rare Lancashire lichens such as *Arthopyrenia ranunculospira* and *Peltigera horizontalis*.

In the valley at Gibraltar Farm, Silverdale, are Ash trees clinging to the limestone valley sides. If you look on their shaded trunks, a few old woodland indicators can be found by clinging to the rock face and looking at the trees jutting out of the rock.

The roadside trees of our urban areas have a completely different flora. Twenty years ago, the trees carried

lichens adapted to acidic conditions. *Lecanora conizaeoides* was very common together with *Hypogymnia physodes* and some *Parmelia* species. These acidic conditions have now been replaced by ones favouring high levels of nitrogen from car exhausts and fertilisers. Today, a walk along a suburban street reveals trees covered in nitrogen loving lichens. These can cover entire tree trunks. The leafy species are the pale green *Flavoparmelia caperata*, the grey green ones are *Parmelia sulcata*, *Parmotrema perlatum* and *Hypotrachyna revoluta*.

In contrast these trees will also have a good display of the orange/yellow species, the leafy *Xanthoria parietina* and the minutely lobed, crustose *Candelaria concolor*. The green, shrubby lichens will also be found: *Ramalina farinacea*, looking like a bit of frayed rope, and the flat lobes of *Evernia prunastri*. What has happened to the once acid loving species? They have declined dramatically as SO₂ levels have declined and the once ubiquitous *Lecanora conizaeoides* is now very rare in Lancashire. Other lichens are now moving in and many trees in urban parks and along roadsides have a flora dramatically more diverse and luxuriant than 20 years ago.

Why should such a mundane habitat be considered a highlight? The dramatic changes in species and lichen cover in the last 20 years have been so rapid that they are indeed a habitat well worth looking at and may reveal even more new species.

Lichens on rocks

Lichens are like many flowering plants with a distinct difference between the calcicoles on the Carboniferous Limestone and the acid loving species on Carboniferous grits and Silurian slates.

Around Silverdale and Arnside, the limestones provide a superb range of habitats for lichens to colonise. The pavements, such as at Gait Barrows have a poor flora; they are very exposed and dry out rapidly. In cracks and crevices, however, there is a very rich lichen flora, as good as any other limestone in Britain. Warton Crag has an impressive range of 97 species, many on rock or soil. However, virtually any limestone outcrops in the area will carry characteristic species with large, white *Aspicilia calcarea*, orange *Caloplaca flavescens* and the orange splashes of other *Caloplaca* species, together with the brittle, black, ear shaped lobes of *Collema auriforme*.

All around the Arnside area, there is another very important limestone habitat; the dry stone walls. Whilst they are made of the same rock as the natural outcrops, the walls provide niches where some species such as *Squamarina cartilaginea*, *Placidium squamulosum* and *Toninia sedifolia* are more common and luxuriant than

on natural outcrops. These walls are a very important habitat and their maintenance is an important conservation issue to maintain their rich lichen and bryophyte flora. The walls around the old site of the Leighton Furnace are a good place to see this rich wall flora with the green thallus and orange-brown fruits of *Squamarina cartilaginea* forming sheets on a wall. No other location in Lancashire has such a spectacular display of this species. On the adjacent wall is the distinctive *Caloplaca cirrochroa*, a very local limestone species with bright orange spot-like soralia (small fluffy aggregations to 0.5mm.).

If we travel east of Arnside, the bedrock is gritstone and can be found at Clougha and Tarnbrook. These rocks provide a silica rich, slow weathering substrate with a flora that contrasts sharply with that seen at Arnside. A common species here is *Parmelia saxatilis*, forming large, grey-green rosettes. This lichen was once worth more than its weight in gold, but only if it was collected from the skull of a hanged person! A similar, common lichen on the rock is the brown *Parmelia omphalodes*. Another, easily recognised, lichen is *Acarospora fuscata*, looking like brown cracked mud. If you get down on your knees and examine the rocks with a lens, a range of crustose species can be seen. At Clougha, 34 species have been recorded from the grit boulders and pebbles. Further east, at Tarnbrook, a specimen I collected and thought to be a common lichen turned out to be *Rhizocarpon subgeminatum*, with only a handful of records in England. Lichenology is full of such serendipitous moments!

Coastal Lichens

Lancashire has two places where substantial bedrock crops out; the limestones at Arnside and Silverdale and the sandstones at Heysham. These rocks have species characteristic of inland sites but the influence of salt spray and inundation by the tides leads to maritime specialists. The limestones around Jack Scout and Jenny Brown's Point have a range of common lichens together with some rather rare ones such as *Lecanora aghardiana* and *Caloplaca alociza*, the latter at its most northerly location in Britain.

At Heysham, the rocks are Carboniferous sandstones. These are an acid substrate and are the only Lancashire site for the green shrubby *Ramalina siliquosa* and the green-brown, finger-like lobes of *Anaptychia runcinata*. These two maritime species are common on the rocks below St Patrick's Chapel but never occur on limestones and so are absent from Arnside.

Lichens on Acid Moorland

The best place to see these lichens are the uplands above Leck Beck and the moors east of Lancaster. Here, the easiest group to identify are the *Cladonias*.

The genus is very easy to recognise with a spikey thallus sometimes with bright red fruits. Common species seen on a walk north west from the Birk Bank car park along the base of the fell will reveal *Cladonia portentosa*, *C. arbuscula*, *C. furcata* and *C. uncialis*. This genus is a nightmare to identify: in Britain we have around 58 *Cladonia* species (not to mention subspecies and varieties) and some require fancy chromatography to be sure of their name. My advice is to get to grips with the more common ones (20 species) and leave the rest to the experts.

An easy place to see lichens on acid moorland is at Clougha where a walk north eastwards from Birk Bank Car Park reveals 19 species on peat and acid soils. You can also look at the gritstone boulders and the trees tucked into the base of the blocky scree. The sandstone carries a restricted flora with the large, grey-green thallus of *Parmelia saxatilis*.

Lichens in Towns and Homes

No habitat is safe from lichen colonisation and around any house lichens will be found on the roof where birds perch, and many will have orange *Xanthorias* and grey *Physcias* on their own homes. Anyone with old sandstone or limestone walls and structures should have a nice array of lichens similar to those found on natural outcrops.

Your own house and garden are a good place to start looking at lichens. The only equipment needed is a x10 hand lens and an I.D. guide such as the Field Study Council's fold-out charts on Urban Lichens 1 & 2 by Frank Dobson. In the same series, Lichens on Twigs by Wolseley, James & Alexander is also useful for beginners.

North Lancashire's Finest Lichen Site

In the north east of V.C. 60 is a pointed strip of land. This is Leck Beck, Ease Gill and Springs Wood, covering about 4-5km.². It is remote from industrial Lancashire; it has acid and calcareous rocks, dry stone walls, old fence posts, tree stumps, relict trees and wooded areas, acid and basic soils and aquatic habitats. There is a very wide range of habitats found nowhere else in the county. I have recorded 193 different lichens from this area, around 40% of the species found in the whole of the county. It is a truly remarkable valley and a highlight by anyone's definition.

The Future

My recent investigations of lichens have concentrated on the lichens and bryophytes in urban parks. These have proved to be important, especially for epiphytic species. Lichens once thought to be 'unlikely' are now turning up, albeit in small amounts. The 'old woodland indicator' *Normandina pulchella* with its distinctive blue-

green, ear shaped lobes is now turning up in the most unlikely places: Stanley Park Blackpool, Ashton Gardens St Annes and parks in Bispham. The motto is that lichens are on the move with changes in air quality and global warming which make new discoveries a real

possibility. You just need to look carefully and be prepared for some real surprises.

Mike Gosling

Photos are on page 32

Wildflower Seed Gathering

On July 9th, I attended an event which was organized as part of the Morecambe Bay nature Improvement Area meadow restoration project.

A group of about 15 gathered on a sunny day at Gait Barrows NR to hear Helen Rawlinson (Cumbria Wildlife Trust Officer and organiser of the meeting) explain about the benefits of gathering local seed to create wild flower meadows. The party migrated to nearby Coldwell Parrock where Reuben Neville (Lancashire Wildlife Trust Officer) demonstrated how the Stihl 86C suction motor is used to collect the seeds. A good supply of seeds was obtained, such as Yellow Rattle, but of course only those ripe at the time and available for normal animal/wind dispersal.

After further ramblings back into Gait Barrows NR, Bill Grayson (local farmer of rare breeds and traditional meadows) talked about his restoration methods and allowed us all to hand pick seeds from the meadows. This method is of course slower but can be species specific and more selective for the ripeness, as well as quality, of seed harvested.

Useful connections were made between local land owners, farmers, council officers and wildlife trust groups who needed to manage the environment to enhance this previously diminishing habitat. All benefited from the ideas, knowledge and skills of the group.

Chris Workman

Photo is on page 32

A New Species of Centipede Found in Heysham Bath!

Regular Readers may remember the article in last year's Newsletter called 'A New Record For A Centipede' which described how John and Betty Holding had found the centipede, *Henia vesuviana* in their bath (situated in a downstairs bathroom). Tony Barber, the National Recorder for Centipedes, has confirmed the species and that it was the most northerly record and, as far as he was aware, it was unusual in being an indoor one (he had circulated the international myriapod community).

John and Betty continued to find this species in their bath or bathroom over the last year (2014). John has written, "The only unusual condition here, besides being west facing and a bath on the ground floor with minimum fall along the waste outlet, is perhaps that the gully to the sewer is surrounded by a long flower bed full of rarely disturbed *Monbretia* and which contains plenty of leaf litter likely to be suitable habitat. The vast majority of gulleys next to the houses are on hard pathways or drives - unsuitable habitat to be traversed by this or any other centipede (?)."

On January 25th, 2015, John and Betty found another species of centipede in their ground floor bath - "A more common one I assume but never encountered in the bath before; 15 mm in length. Picked up the habit from *Vesuviana*?" John emailed the information and photo to Tony Barber again who confirmed that this one was a more usual one called *Lithobius melanops*. Tony Barber wrote, "These 'little brown jobs' do tend to look rather alike but the slightly darker wide longitudinal band on the body tends to be characteristic of this species whereas most British ones are a uniform reddish or darker brown to almost black. The size is about right too. It is also a species found in cool greenhouses and indoors as well as gardens & disturbed sites. I once worked in a 7-storey building with a greenhouse on the roof where it was found, presumably in that case coming in with plants. I have a record of it from a hospital in the Falkland Islands, so it certainly gets about a bit."

The photo of *Lithobius melanops* is in this edition - look out for it in your gardens and, perhaps, indoors!

Barbara Crooks and John Holding

Photo is on page 32

Cryptic Quiz - compiled by Mike Moon

You need to move onto my wavelength, think outside the box, or think laterally. All the answers are directly linked to British Wildlife. Have fun!

1. Master of the Soviet Fleet
2. This little chap likes to sing in the muck
3. The *plop" not so often heard these days Is a real giveaway
4. It talks whilst it flies
5. Should this spotted beastie be in the honours list
6. This fish is an old fashioned weapon
7. Swears with a frogs voice
8. Arable crop that hears you coming
9. Useful in the allotment
10. Does this rodent look after your money
11. Standing room only, for a bird
12. Could this be a Bond film
13. Not a fish, but top of the bill
14. Upset an amphibian by sitting on this
15. Often on TV but not a happy bird
16. A Great War (WW1) flying relic
17. This creature has two common names, The clues are an amalgam of these -
He uses a quern stone, but not a hammer, too painful on this part of the anatomy.
18. A ring in his nose in the ships loo.
19. Not a butterfly, but a plant
20. Cinderella would love one of these
21. Funeral for a cat
22. Sea Air and Land Teams
23. Need to go for a drive to study these, give yourself a mighty tick if you get it right
What are you doing?
24. You could park your car at Urswick on the way to Dalton. What is the link?
25. The cockerel would have a surprise if this jetted in

Answers are on page 27

Cover photo— Orange ladybird cluster by Mike Foley

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Layout by Laura Sivell

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