

Wildlife

In North Lancashire 2013



32nd Annual Newsletter of the

North Lancashire Naturalists Group

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North Lancashire Naturalists 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, working parties on local reserves and the production of the 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.nlng.co.uk and also in the Wildlife Trusts brochure 'Wildlife What's On' which can be obtained locally from Heysham Nature Reserve (01524 855030) or by Email- info@lancswt.org.uk. For further information contact the Chairman, Mike Moon, E-mail mikejmoon@aol.com or telephone him on 01524 701163.

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Look at our website!

www.nlng.co.uk

Editorial

This, the 32nd edition of the NLNG newsletter, contains an abundance of articles on a variety of subjects and I hope there will be something of interest for everyone.

Luckily, we experienced good weather on all our field trips last year: they were well attended with a number of people again coming from other parts of the county. Five of our outings are described in this edition and I hope that even more people may feel encouraged to take part in these interesting events. Perhaps more people may also like to write about some for next year's newsletter - plenty of assistance is always given with naming the species found - you don't have to be an expert!

The Records contributions, whether a summary of records received or articles about some specific species, will hopefully encourage readers to go out into the countryside and see what they can find. Please can I gently remind everyone to send any records to them? They are always willing to help with identification and records provided also help them to learn more about the distribution of species in our area. Mike Foley, the new Orthoptera Recorder has written a very detailed and helpful article on local species and Moth records are also requested this year in order to help to complete a new National Atlas of Larger Moths.

The Miscellany section includes an article by a new member, Steve Garland, who introduces himself and his interests. In addition to those about specific species, there are three

about reserves in our area. Anne Smith writes about her experience of Myers Allotment, to which she has devoted many hours, and Chris Workman brings us up-to-date with the development of Fairfield Urban N.R. Martin Sherlock describes his visit to a small reserve at Cranwell Avenue in Lancaster, which is being restored by a local neighbourhood group; a community development inspired by a teenager.

I am extremely grateful to Laura Sivell who does all the typesetting and layout; her help is invaluable. My thanks go to all the Trust Staff, Records and members who have given their time in providing such interesting reports, articles and images. Thanks again to John and Betty Holding for their help and support. Finally, I would like to thank L.W.T. for allowing us to use their printing resources again; to Catherine Haddon for her help and especially to John, the volunteer, for all his hard work.

I would be happy to receive any suggestions for articles or changes from readers for future editions.

Barbara Crooks

Corrections and Clarifications

My apologies to Stan Parrott for the mistake made last year in naming the photograph on the front cover. It should have been Redstart not Redpoll.

Conservation and planning 2013

Re-reading past articles since 2009, I realise that mentioning Claughton Windfarm in the first paragraph has become something of a tradition. Hopefully that saga will finally end this year. The third application was unanimously rejected in June 2013 and Community Windpower had until Christmas Eve (2013) to submit an Appeal. Tim Sarney (of FELLs) tells me that all references to the scheme have been deleted from the company website and that they refuse to answer his emails/calls, so, fingers crossed, it is a sign of the scheme's final demise.

Still on the subject of windfarms, Heysham Peninsula has seen a number of windfarm developments consented (Banks, BT); others are in development (Heysham Port, Middleton) plus associated infrastructure (National Grid substation approved next to Heysham Moss, west of old railway sidings). The DONG offshore scheme, with landfall at Potts Corner leading to a new substation adjoining Heysham Moss (east of old railway sidings), is currently under examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The impact on the Belted Beauty colony is perhaps the principal ecological issue and whether Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) can successfully route the windfarm cables underneath the colony without damage: or what happens if HDD fails. The Trust is also concerned about possible impacts on Heysham Moss – hydrology, breeding and wintering birds, lighting and, what is hard to quantify, the visual impact and experience of those visiting or

working on the Moss. The examination closes on 12/5/14, after which the Examining Panel will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State whose decision should be known by November/December 2014.

Further inland, we are starting to see a proliferation of small or single wind turbine applications within the Lune Valley/Bowland AONB. These may have implications for wildlife depending on their location and, increasingly, because of cumulative effect as more become operational. The AONB has a Renewable Energy Position Statement, available on their website, which is quite clear as to what is deemed acceptable in landscape terms within the AONB.

This is the first year in which I have seen an application for a ground-mounted solar farm (or array) within the Lancaster district, and based on experience elsewhere within Lancashire (especially at home in Heapey), we are likely to see more applications in the coming year.

We have contributed to the City Council planning policy documents and the Bowland AONB Management Plan as well as commenting on many individual planning applications. We are fortunate to have the services of a volunteer, a retired senior planner, once a week, which has greatly increased our capacity to comment on planning policy with real authority. It might seem a bit dreary, but if you get biodiversity issues embedded into planning policies it should make for better decisions in the long term, and

definitely makes it easier to challenge applications where required.

For me, the overriding event of 2013 was the loss of Dr Jennifer Newton MBE. Jennifer was always the first person I would turn to for advice and I'm sure her wise counsel, especially when I first arrived in Lancashire, saved me from some very daft mistakes. I found it very sobering to reflect on the amount of time she (and David) devoted to the Trust (40 years?) and the breadth and depth of her involvement. Jennifer was so modest that I almost felt I learnt more about her from her daughter Siobhan's Guardian Other Lives appreciation (11/4/13) and the celebration concert at St Mary's, Hornby, in May, than I did in 18 years of knowing her.

Looking forward to 2014, energy schemes are again likely to dominate my work. We expect new applications for hydraulic fracturing (fracking) to be submitted by Cuadrilla for sites on the Fylde and possibly east into Bowland. They have pulled out of 2 meetings at short notice now but our list of questions is available on the Trust's website. We will also be discussing fracking with the RSPB in the New Year and it will be great to be working with Graham Jones again (new RSPB North West Area Manager). What I am not looking forward to next year is the construction of the Heysham-M6 link, but I am sure that I am not alone in this.

Kim Wisdom
Conservation Officer for North Lancashire

Reserves Reports

North Lancashire Reserves

This has been a busy year on LWT reserves in North Lancs. but good progress has been made on some new projects.

Mossland Reserves

The Large Heath reintroduction project began in earnest this year with the collection under licence of gravid females from the donor site, Winmarleigh Moss. These were removed to a captive breeding facility at Chester Zoo in order to egg lay onto Cottongrass within rearing enclosures. This has worked well and staff at Chester Zoo have reported good numbers of larvae. The larvae will complete their life cycle within the enclosures and the resultant adult butterflies will be introduced to the receptor site, Heysham Moss, in July 2014. At about the same time, a small number of gravid females will be taken from Winmarleigh to start the second rearing phase. With the restoration work already having been undertaken at Heysham Moss and that upcoming at Winmarleigh Moss, the objective is to secure the future of this butterfly at both mossland reserves.

Heysham Nature Reserve

The annual round of habitat management on the reserve continued this year, thankfully with some settled summer weather in which to complete our grassland work. The weekly butterfly transect continues to provide encouraging counts, including a record total of 291 butterflies on 26th July. This included 139 Gatekeeper, a remarkable figure considering that the counts that have been recorded on the reserve as recently as 2008 were in single figures. Counts of Burnet Companion Moth were also up again on the previous year, with 5 recorded on the transect on the 17th June.

Warton Crag

The beginning of the year saw the first of what will be a cluster of coppice coups created in Strickland Wood, along the boundary with Westfield. This work is being done to create conditions favoured by priority butterfly species, in particular the early successional conditions on which High Brown and Pearl Bordered Fritillaries depend. Coppicing will take place annually over the next few years, and the coups

are being linked to existing fritillary habitat on the Crag through woodland ride creation. It is anticipated that the removal of trees from limestone outcrops will also benefit species such as Cistus Forester Moth and Northern Brown Argus.

Middleton Nature Reserve

The Wildlife Trust is now into the fifth year of managing this County Wildlife Site as a Nature Reserve through an agreement with Lancaster City Council. We are also part way through a separate five-year project that is helping to achieve key management objectives for the reserve, such as removing invasive Sea Buckthorn and increasing the areas of species rich grassland and fen.

This project has also enabled us to fund a baseline aquatic invertebrate survey for all water bodies on the reserve - the data from which should be available in early 2014.

The late spring delayed the emergence of adult Large Red Damselfly on the reserve with the first recorded on 20th May: likewise the Four-spotted Chaser was first seen on 5th June. Thereafter, emergence patterns occurred which were closer to those of previous years. Despite favourable weather, there was only one Red-veined Darter record this year on the 19th July, but during the same period, Emperor Dragonfly males were observed defending territory on at least four water bodies.

Notable records for 2013 include Least Minor Moth (recorded by John Girdley in July): this is a significant record of a nationally scarce moth which is likely to be associated with the site's artificial limestone geology. Short-eared Owl was recorded hunting over the reserve early in the year, Water Shrews were recorded on site during summer survey work, and Common Lizards were recorded in May. Although Common Lizard records have been sporadic over the past 3 - 4 years, there are indications that the reserve may support a small population, which is notable given the scarcity of reptile records.

Freeman's Pools

Conservation grazing on this reserve began in the autumn, using Shorthorn Heifers provided by our grazier Bill Grayson.

The aim is to use grazing to help create a varied grassland sward and to help control scrub.

Groundworks have been continuing to create a more varied wetland mosaic and improve pond margins. Black-tailed Skimmer were recorded egg-laying in July where last winter's works were carried out. Encouragingly, at least one pair of Reed Bunting and 4+ pairs of Sedge Warbler bred on the reserve this year. Fantastic views were had of adult Sedge Warblers feeding fledglings amongst the reedbed.

Other notable records for the reserve include Otter (one seen in the main pool in May and runs and spraints found across the site) and Marsh Harrier (recorded hunting across the reserve in August).

And finally....

Huge thanks go once again to the volunteers and naturalists that provide invaluable help with management and recording

on North Lancs reserves.

The efforts of our volunteers has helped to get a great deal of important work done over the past year, including Warton Crag coppicing, the thorny task of Sea Buckthorn eradication at Middleton, as well as ringing and recording on many reserves. So thanks very much to you all.

As usual, if you have any records for the reserves from 2013 or earlier, please do get in touch.

Steve Ryder, North Lancs Reserves Worker

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Photos accompanying this article are on page 7

Aughton Woods Nestboxes Report – 2013

This year the breeding season was a tale of two halves. The spring and early summer were extremely cold, followed by unusually warm and dry weather from mid June through to autumn.

The arrival of many of our spring migrants was very late, as was the start of nesting activities of migrants and resident birds alike. A number of Blue Tits were seen to begin nest building and even egg laying, and then pause for a week or so before continuing when the weather warmed up.

Virtually all the nest monitoring was carried out by John Mason this year. Of the 37 boxes present in total, 35 were monitored this year and the occupancy was as follows:

Treecreeper – 1, Blue Tit – 12, Great Tit – 3.

Nest Building was begun in 4 boxes but did not progress and 15 remained empty.

It was exciting to find the Treecreeper box occupied for the second year in succession. It was unconfirmed whether or

not either of the pair was one of last year's birds but 5 eggs were laid, all hatched and the young successfully fledged.

The number of boxes used by Tit species was 15 (only one fewer than in 2012). However, the total of 101 eggs laid was much fewer than the 140 of last year. Nest building and egg laying were generally around two weeks later than in 2012. Success rates were good with all three of the Great Tits fledging their brood, and 8 of the 12 broods of Blue Tits fledging successfully. Brood sizes were reasonable, ranging from 8 to 10 for Blue Tit and 7 to 8 for Great Tit.

No Pied Flycatchers appeared to be present in the wood at all this year. The habitat is now perhaps marginal here since in recent years this species has been moving into woods higher up in the local valleys, possibly because of climate warming or the considerable increase in the number of nestboxes erected in those woods.

Alan Draper

Accompanying photo is on page 7

Butterflies on Warton Crag 2013

This year, the weekly transect was carried out by David Newton and myself, usually done together but at times individually, depending on our diaries.

April saw a very slow start to the year, with only 4 butterflies seen in that month in total. The cold weather and the low numbers experienced in the previous year resulted in a delay in the emergence of butterflies throughout the country in general. There was a delay of several weeks on the Crag, not helped by the disappointing cool and grey weather in May and June. The count of Small Heath was down, compared to the great numbers seen last year. Dingy Skipper seemed to do better but again numbers were smaller than in 2012,

whilst Northern Brown Argus was only recorded singly on the transects.

The weather improved from the end of June and continued through the summer months. We were, however, disappointed by low counts for the Pearl and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries and, although the Larger Fritillaries fared better, their numbers were not as good as last year. Perhaps our expectations had been raised because of the tree clearing done on the site in the previous autumn/winter, but the changes hoped for will probably take a longer period to materialise.

The Browns did extremely well again, notably good numbers of Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods. Ringlets too showed a marked increase in their population size from only

a handful in 2011/12 to over 50: they have extended their territory on the Reserve. Another species in decline, the Wall Brown, still had two broods, but the numbers were lower - probably affected by the poor spring weather. They are a very small colony, only found near the summit on the LWT site.

The Whites had their best season for several years, particularly the Small Whites, helped by the good summer months

and the plentiful supply of Bramble and flora. Red Admirals too were more numerous during the late summer.

Further coppicing and scrub clearance in autumn 2013 and winter 2014 will hopefully help to produce better results in the near future.

Barbara Crooks

Recorders' Reports

Horsetails: segmented ferns

Ferns, horsetails, and clubmosses all reproduce by spores rather than seeds and have similarities of structure and life-cycle that have in the past led botanists to group them together. In recent years, however, detailed chemical and anatomical research has shown that horsetails are really specialised ferns, and that clubmosses and related plants are only very distantly related to them (See Robbin Moran's A Natural History of Ferns, Timber Press 2004). The characteristic segmented stems and branches of horsetails are very different from those of typical ferns, as are the spore-bearing structures which in horsetails take the form of cones that surmount the fertile shoots. In some species, the pale brown fertile shoots appear early in the year before the green sterile shoots, whilst in others, cones are produced on the green shoots.

Horsetails have a long history. They were prominent in the first forests, over 300 million years ago, when some reached over 10 metres high. Today, we have only 15 species worldwide, all in the genus *Equisetum*, the tallest of which, the Mexican Giant Horsetail *E. Myriochaetum*, is often over 4 metres tall. Its thin stems need the support of surrounding

vegetation. In Britain we have 9 species (7 in NW England) and 11 hybrids (5 in NW England). Our largest British species, the Giant Horsetail *E. telmateia*, which has distinctively white stems, can reach 2 metres. They mostly occur in damp, mineral soils rich in silica.

Few horsetails have horticultural value and Field Horsetail *E. arvense*, can be an invasive weed, spreading rapidly by underground rhizomes and causing problems for gardeners and farmers. Records of horsetails providing food for wildlife are rare, and indeed livestock have been known to suffer thiaminase poisoning from eating hay containing these plants. Minute particles of silica on the stem ridges made some species valuable for polishing arrows and other wooden items before sandpaper was invented, and for scouring metal utensils - hence the mediaeval name of Shavegrass. The Rough Horsetail or Dutch Rush *Equisetum hyemale* which has unbranched and particularly abrasive stems, was especially effective. It is not one of our most abundant species and had to be imported from Holland to meet demand.

Trevor Pearce

Photos for this article are on page 8

Lichens

I have been looking for lichens in my garden recently and have come across *Lecanora campestris* on stones bordering my pond. This is a common crustose lichen found on both calcareous and acidic rocks, on concrete, mortar and nutrient-rich acidic wood. *L. campestris* (sometimes called Rim Lichen) forms patches of lumpy, greyish crust (thallus) with a paler border. The fruiting bodies (apothecia) are reddish brown discs which darken when dry. The discs are surrounded by smooth margins which become wavier as they mature.

There are several variable species of *Lecanora*, many of which are found on a wide range of substrata. Some species thrive on trees and wooden structures as well as on walls and rocks, whereas others are limited to wood. Of the species found on trees, some grow on acidic bark such as oak while others prefer a neutral bark. Furthermore, whereas some *Lecanoras* are found on exposed or well-lit sites, others prefer shade. There are also species that tolerate polluted habitats and one species in particular, *Lecanora conizae-*

oides, is associated almost exclusively with polluted areas. The extensive variety of habitats is encouraging in that it increases my chances of finding different species of this genus!

Another lichen I have in my garden is a *Lepraria* species, which has formed a large, greenish-grey, powdery patch on the shady side of a mossy step, growing over the moss itself. *Leprarias* are commonly found in the shade but individual species can be difficult to identify due to the lack of fruiting bodies. These lichens are known as leprose which refers to the powdery nature of the thallus.

I would be grateful to receive any records - there are common species that are identifiable and plenty of useful identification guidance on the internet, though, as always, some information has to be treated with caution - I recently came across a site advertising lichen seeds for your garden!

Cis Brook

Photos are on page 7



Large Heath (reserves reports)

Steve Ryder



Shorthorn heifer at Freeman's Pools (reserves reports)

Steve Ryder



Clearing Blackthorn at Middleton (reserves reports)

Steve Ryder



Lecanora campestris (lichen report)

Cis Brook



Lepraria spp. (lichen report)

Cis Brook



Shire Oaks (Aughton Wood Nestboxes)

Alan Draper



E. telmatia and Ruth (ferns report)

T Pearce



E. telmatia (ferns report)

R Pearce



Sericomyia silentis (hoverfly report)

L Renshaw



Silky Wainscot (moth report)

J Girdley

Hoverflies

Due to the inclement weather, hoverflies did not emerge in any real numbers until May. This was 3 months later than 2012. They appeared in great numbers from then until mid October. Ivy, their favourite autumn nectar and pollen source, had by then gone over.

The Drone-fly *Eristalis tenax* can sometimes overwinter, as can a few others, including the Marmalade fly *Episyrphus balteatus*, but you may only find 1 each winter.

David Talbot and Linda Renshaw kindly sent me images they had recorded and, once identified by Barry Brigden or my-

self, were added to the 600 records I sent in this year to the National Recording Scheme.

I have now seen 99 of the 280 species that have been recorded so far in the United Kingdom.

I have sent Leighton Moss Nature Reserve and Haybridge Nature Reserve their separate records for the year which helps to create a somewhat different interest to the norm.

Brian Hugo

Photo for this article is on page 8

Northern VC60 Moth report 2013

January - March

The year 2013 had one the slowest starts to the mothing year on record. The only regular site showing any early promise was, as usual, Millhouses. Moths included such regulars as Dotted Border, Early Moth and Spring Usher which peaked at 16 moths on the 5th January (P. J. Marsh – PJM). Away from the Oak Woods, moths were very thin on the ground.

A couple of exceptions were *Depressaria heraclei* in Heysham (A. Draper – AD) and an unexpected *Plutella xylostella* (diamond-back moth) in Yealand Conyers (B. Hancock – BH).

It was the 14th February before 3 Small Brindled Beauty, 31 Pale Brindled Beauty and 9 March Moth came to light in Mill Houses (PJM).

Justine Patton (JP), carrying her Heath Trap into many inaccessible locations, began to amass a notable set of records during 2013. On the 16th Feb, her trapping in Burton wood produced 26 Dotted Border.

March is usually the month when recording activity really begins to take off. However, March 2013 was unseasonably cold and very few moths were seen.

April

April also started slowly and it was mid month before any significant counts were recorded. Typically, Millhouses produced the goods but even so it was the 13th before 212 Small Quaker were recorded (PJM). Grey Shoulder-knot was found in Yealand Conyers (BH).

The very variable (and often mistaken for a micro) Oak Nyctoline had its best year yet with 5 spring records between 14th April – 6th May and all in the Arnside and Silverdale AONB.

Steve Palmer (SMP) reports on two Biodiversity Action Plan species (BAP):
“April is the month that starts off the BAP monitoring process in Lancashire and Barred Tooth-striped is one of our

local specialities that we try to keep an eye on. It has suffered from under-recording over recent years so it was good to hear of 10 records from 7 sites on the Silverdale limestone this year, the first on the 2nd April at Warton Crag (JP) and the final one in the Silverdale Moss area at the very late date, for a moth that would normally peak in mid-April, of 15th May (JG).

“In stark contrast, one of our most important BAP species, the Belted Beauty, had a disastrous season, presumably due to the prolonged cold weather and didn’t even make an appearance until late April, a month later than usual. The maximum seen on any one day was 5 (P. & V. Gilchrist) in late April and the annual organised count produced none at all. The moth is also under threat from a potential set of wind-farm cables routing through the northern edge of the colony. Butterfly Conservation and the Lancashire Moth Group have been, and still are, deeply involved in objecting and undergoing detailed discussions with the company involved, DONG Energy. Some concessions to the route and cable laying process have been achieved but there is still a long way to go before we feel that we can guarantee the safety of this threatened species. To put this in context, this colony is the last viable population of this moth in the whole of England and Wales – a chilling thought and highlighting how important it is that we don’t lose this battle. In addition to the direct negotiations, one of our members, Graham Dixon, organised an on-line petition which at last count was well past the 1000 signature level. Hopefully this co-ordinated pressure will bear fruit and it really highlights the importance of the monitoring that takes place of this and our other BAP species.”

May

By the beginning of May, moths were appearing, on average, about three weeks later than usual, a pattern not reliably broken until late summer.

On the 4th, Square Spot was found on Silverdale Moss (J. Girdley – JG) during a sheet and light session – this species remains extremely local in its distribution, but possibly also overlooked, with only a few known sites.

On the 6th, the very local Mullein came to light in Yealand Conyers (BH).

Ten Emperor Moths were seen by day on Winmarleigh Moss, 19th May (B. Dyson – BD) and the following day an Alder Kitten was attracted to actinic light in Carnforth (L. Lyon – LL).

Rather unusually, a check of an old bath tub on Warton Crag (SMP) produced many small dead moths that needed dissection to identify them. They all (16 male and 7 female) turned out to be *Cosmiotes freyerella*, a species believed to be very local in the county that is obviously considerably over-looked.

JUNE

Although moths were beginning to appear in slightly better numbers, many were quite late emerging, giving an unusual mix of spring and summer species resting together in the traps.

Just two records of *Anania funebris* occurred this year, both at Gait Barrows, on the 4th and 10th June (Anne Smith – AS). This was much later than normal. None were recorded at the usual Warton Crag stronghold despite extensive searching throughout May.

Grey Scalloped Bar was found in Bay Horse (N. Rogers – NR) on the 11th.

Ash Pug seems to be making itself known more frequently than in the past. Seven were found at four sites in VC60, the first being in Yealand Conyers (BH) on the 11th. On the same date the first Heart and Club of the year came to light in Heysham (J. Holding – JH) preludeing a good season for this moth.

Netted Pug was found by the River Keer in mid June (BH + JG) nectaring on its favoured food plant, Bladder Champion. I suspect detailed checks of this plant at other sites could turn up the goods. (Champion is very common at Sunderland if anyone wants to take up the challenge).

On the 16th June, ten Cistus Forester were located during a daytime search on Warton Crag (BH) and in the evening at the same site *Pseudoswammerdamia combinella* came to light (JG, PJM), this being one of only two known sites for the moth in the county. Also on the 16th, earlier in the day, JG located 6 Burnet Companion in grassland at Heysham NR. This site also produced Shaded Pug that evening (AD), a moth that has not been seen in the county away from the Heysham area since 1994.

On the 17th, a Shark was found in a Bay Horse light trap (NR), the only record of this moth during 2013.

Another good reason why daytime field work should be a feature of any moth recorder's armoury came on the 21st June when the beautiful, but very small, *Elachista gleichenella* was found on Myers Allotment (T. Hutchinson – TH) – the first record with data for VC60 (details of a previous sighting have not yet been located).

On the 22nd, the first of an intriguing set of records of Least Minor (Nb) was reported from one of its usual haunts at Yealand Hall Allotments (BH). It peaked at this site on the 1st July with 20 seen (JG) but, of much more significance, it also

came to sheet and light well away from its normally very restricted habitat requirements at Middleton NR (9/7) (JG).

Beautiful Carpet (24/6) was recorded for the first time since 2009 in an actinic trap set high on Warton Crag. (PJM / JP)

Towards the last week of June the weather was picking up at last.

JULY

Lancashire was beginning to bask in the summery conditions that blessed this season.

Striped Wainscot was at Heysham (JH) on the 7th and two Beautiful Snout were at Lord's Lot Wood on the 10th (PJM).

Annulet is seen just about annually in this area but almost exclusively in the AONB: one at Plain Quarry, Burton 10th July was new for here, but not entirely unexpected.

V-moth populations have been shrinking in recent years and so 16 records during 2013, albeit, all in the Silverdale area, was an improvement. The first of these was in Warton village on the 12th July (M. Elsworth – ME)

As the month progressed, interesting records continued to pour in of local species and also staggeringly high numbers of some species.

Trapping at the tip of the North Harbour Wall, Heysham, held intriguing possibilities and almost everything would be new for the 10km square (SD36) which is 99% sea. PJM, JG and JP took traps there on several dates. The 13th July produced a Lancashire record count of 236 White-line Dart and contained 28 species which included 14 Lime-speck Pug and 62 *Crambus perlella*. Also found there were *Monochroa tetragonella* (Nb), (7 records from the area and the best year yet for this species) and 2 *Cochylidia implicitana*, 16-17th July - these were the 2nd and 3rd records for northern VC60.

Each day was turning up something exciting as July progressed. On the 15th, Reddish Light Arches came to light in Yealand Conyers (BH), the first record in the county since 2004. Marbled White Spot was added to the VC60 list at the same site on the 16th (BH). This species was first seen in South Lancashire in 2004 and is presumably slowly spreading north.

"An evening visit to the saltmarsh near Sunderland Point (SMP) on the 16th produced a few of Steve's target micromoth, *Monochroa tetragonella* (Nb). It was, however, the sheer numbers of *Bactra lancealana* (many thousands – just impossible to count) that made it an extraordinary visit; well those and the presence of one *Epinotia nanana* (a conifer feeding species!) and at least one *Elachista* (formerly *Biselachista*) *scirpi* – not seen in Lancashire since the 19th Century."

Double Dart has its stronghold at Heysham NR, 11 of these accompanied by 15 Blackneck came to light on 17th July (JP). Better still, Convolvulous Hawk-moth appeared at Leighton Moss (Len Bagley – LB), the first record in north Lancashire for five years.

Golden Plusia has been quite scarce of late so it was good to get a record of it from Yealand Conyers (BH) on the 20th July.

Silky Wainscot is continuing to consolidate its range across Northern Lancashire - 46 records, was the best ever: the peak count of 16 occurred at Leighton Moss on 20th June (LB). Of these records, 7 were from new sites in SD45 at Middleton and Sunderland Point.

Although moth records had been picking up throughout the month, the night of 22nd July was warm, still and humid and marked a turning point in terms of sheer numbers: the trap at Sunderland was overflowing but heavy rain stopped an accurate count. However, Gold Triangle *Hypsopygia costalis* was new for the site (this species has had a few poor years with just 2 records this year – the other from Millhouses).

The next night saw 854 moths of 109 species, including 93 of the Nationally Scarce (Nb) salt marsh species *Pedasia Aridella* and 102 *Agriphila selasella*, (which later turned up at several new sites). Also in the trap were 7 Garden Tiger and 3 Crescent Striped (Nb).

The most exciting moth around at this time, was a Pimpinel Pug found at Heysham NR (PJM) (a female, gen det, JG), the first confirmed record for Lancashire.

Beautiful hook-tip came to light in Heysham (JH) on the 22nd July and Bay Horse on the 27th (NR).

Small Rufous is less than annual in this area, therefore 5 records was exceptional. One in Morecambe 24/7 (JG) was out of context and set the scene, 3 at Sunderland Point (PJM/JP) in early August were new for SD45 and one at Hynning Woods was a little more predictable (BH).

Coleophora lineolea appeared in Morecambe (JG) 26/7.

Epinotia Caprana turned up in an actinic trap set in the northern part of Heysham NR (JP) (29/8). It was the first for SD46 and indeed this and 2 taken at Millhouses (22/9) were the first authenticated records for northern VC60. As there are three other possible confusion species, this is one that needs dissection.

Hynning Woods is the local stronghold of Blomer's Rivulet. There were 9 records of 35 Moths this year, all from late July – early August, and 2013 was the best year yet. Other, quite scarce moths seen in Hynning Woods in reasonable numbers, in the same time frame, were Brown Scallop, Dark Umber, Clay Triple Lines, V-Moth and Barred Carpet.

AUGUST

Large counts of Large Yellow Underwing started to appear in early August. A trap set up in the wilds of north Lancashire on the 1st August (PJM) was found to contain 590! A peak count of Straw Underwing also occurred on this date with 65 in the trap at Heysham (Heysham Moth Team).

Later, 250 Buff Footman were caught on Docker Moor (PJM, JP). These sorts of numbers have been unprecedented in recent years.

August is the prime flight period for Dark Marbled Carpet and 2013 proved a good year for the moth with records from a

few more sites than usual. Recorders are reminded to carefully check the hind-wing markings as Common Marbled Carpet can easily be confused (and regularly is) with this local species.

Further dissections of ear moth specimens this year have proved why it is so necessary to critically examine this entire group. Whilst the pattern is predominantly Large Ear on the Moors, Saltern Ear on the coast and Ear Moth in the Silverdale AONB area, any can turn up anywhere. Saltern Ear has been found on the moors in South Lancashire this year – a real surprise. Crinan Ear is very scarce in Lancashire but one on Burn Moor (T. Whitaker – TW, PJM) and another in Morecambe on the 27th (JG), (only the 2nd Ear moth ever to be recorded at this site) just prove the need for checking.

Bedstraw Hawk Moth appeared in Heysham (JH) on the 6th and the first Pale Eggar of the season appeared at Leck Fell on the 8th (PJM).

A Beech Green Carpet was at Gait Barrows on the 9th (BH). Remarkably 10 were also found at Gait Barrows on the 24th (Graham Jones - GJ) and a single at Mill Houses on the 25th (J. Roberts).

The first Black Arches for VC60 came on the 9th at Mill Houses (PJM) followed by one (accompanied by a Hedge Rustic) at Leighton Moss on the 16th (TH), one in Silverdale on the 19th (D. Talbot) and rounded off with another at Mill Houses on the 21st (PJM). The first Lancashire record was at Martin Mere in 2005.

On the 10th August, Heath Rustic wandered into a coastal garden in Heysham (JH), one of several unusual sightings of moths well away from their normal habitat during this summer.

Farther north on the same day, Waved Black was located in the same underpass at Carnforth Station as two in 2008 – and by the same recorder (TH)! This moth either loves the west coast main line or there is a small breeding population nearby.

From mid to late August a few migrants made an appearance at scattered lowland and coastal sites across the county, mainly comprised of Rush Veneer, Rusty-dot Pearl and Dark Sword-grass.

On the 16th, 4 Grey Chi were in Warton (ME) and the same number at Morecambe on the 27th (JG).

A. latistria had a reasonable season with records received from Heysham, Morecambe and Sunderland Point during August.

SEPTEMBER

“September proved to be a much quieter month than the previous two. Migration was not particularly evident and it looked like many moths were taking a breather after the hectic summer. At this time of year, the annual check for Netted Carpet larvae is organised nationally, covering the colonies in Cumbria and ours in Lancashire. This year it took

place on the 9th with a good number of volunteers finding a total of 558 larvae. This was particularly welcome following the bramble clearance that had been carried out earlier in the year in Hynning Wood - it was very satisfying to see such instant results in plant regeneration and larval numbers."

"September is usually the time when those who like leaf-mine hunting start keeping an eye out for the autumn feeding species. However, it was three leaf-miners in their adult stage that caught our attention."

"Two *Caloptilia cucculipennella* were netted in the Silverdale area (M.Young – MRY, SMP) and were the first records with data for the county – the previous record has not been traced. The larvae mine the leaves and produce cones on wild Privet or Ash so could be more widespread in this area than current records suggest."

"To cap off an excellent autumn for leaf-mining species, the very local miner on Buckthorn, *Stigmella catharticella*, was found in a new area at Heysham in early October (JG)." (per SMP).

One feature of late summer and autumn this year was the somewhat late records of several species. It appears they were a mix of some late emerging, first broods and second brood individuals. The Pale Eggar at Leck Fell on the 24th (PJM) must surely be late emergers. The others are most likely to be second brood individuals and these included Small Phoenix at Mill Houses (PJM) on the 20th September and Heart and Dart at Sunderland Point on the 27th (JG) The late arrivals carried on well into October and produced Haworth's Minor in SD66 (PJM).

To round off September, a couple of late-autumn species appeared rather earlier than usual including Figure of Eight in Carnforth (J. Rae) on the 24th and December Moth at Mill Houses (JG) on the 30th.

OCTOBER

Migrants were beginning to arrive at a few sites across lowland and coastal Lancs. The main influx of moths seems to have started on the 3rd and it is difficult to judge if this arrival was responsible for the later records, or if there continued to be a general arrival over the following weeks. The common migrant *Udea ferrugalis* (Rusty-dot Pearl) was thin on the ground with only two records from Sunderland Point (JG, JP). *Nomophila noctuella* (Rush Veneer) was recorded extensively from four coastal sites, peaking at 10 on the 4th October at Sunderland Point (JG). Dark Sword-grass was recorded from six sites, mostly coastal, although once again the only site with more than a singleton was at Sunderland Point on the 3rd (PJM) when two came to light.

The less regular migrants were recorded between the 4th and the 8th October and comprised Gems at Sunderland Point on the 6th (JG) and Mill Houses on the 7th (PJM). Vestals were widespread across the UK but Lancashire only had two at Mill Houses on the 5th and 8th (PJM) and two at Sunderland Point (JG) on the 6th. The pick of the bunch was a Delicate at Sunderland Point (JP) on the 8th, while Scarce Bordered Straw was found at Sunderland Point (JG) on the

4th and Heysham NR (Heysham Moth Team) on the 7th. The final migrant during this period was a *Convolvulus* Hawk Moth at Heysham on the 22nd (JH).

Humming-bird Hawk Moth appeared in late October, captured on Autumnwatch at Leighton Moss.

Throughout October, numbers of resident species in light traps were quite impressive, including such species as Common Marbled Carpet and Red-green Carpet which had a strong autumn. Notable resident species around in the second half of the month included 12 Sprawler at Mill Houses on the 17th (PJM). *Diurnea lipsiella* was having a really good late season (JP) - it was very easily netted at Warton Crag in late October and the first days of November.

November / December

Good numbers of all the normal winter species occurred in the inland valleys. Once again Millhouses dominated the records.

John Girdley

References:

Lancashire Moths Newsletter (Steve Palmer)
<http://www.lancashiremoths.co.uk/visitor/Newsletters.aspx>

Thanks are due to the many recorders who have submitted records via MapMate to the Lancashire Moth Recording Scheme. Thanks also to people who allowed moth traps to be run from their property: Peter and Veronica Gilchrist (Sunderland), Thelma and Alan Holland (Lower Greenbank), Ian Wolfenden (Burn Moor), Andrew and Catherine Taylor (Botton Head) and Val May (Millhouses). Also people who helped to facilitate moth trapping on private land notably 'Raggy' on Docker Moor and Chris Lennon on Leck Fell.

The next three years will see extensive moth recording working towards the publication of a National Atlas of Larger Moths. It would be really useful if any readers would be prepared to allow moth traps to be run from their properties. This particularly applies to anyone who might have an external socket e.g. in a greenhouse, so security is not compromised by cables running through an open window, a location where the trap can 'overlook' under-recorded woodland, open moorland, coastal areas, hedgerows with isolated old trees - but not someone else's bedroom window! Thanks in anticipation.

Contact: VC60 Moth Recorders.

John Girdley (Micromoths) john@birdtours.co.uk
Pete Marsh (Macro Moths + offers to host traps)
pmrsh123@aol.com

Please consider joining the Lancashire Moths Facebook page.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/119829941488294/>

Photos for this article are on pages 8 and 15

Butterflies

In 2013 we had the sort of summer many people had forgotten was possible. With long spells of reliably dry, warm and sunny weather, it could reasonably be expected that our butterflies had a bumper year as the conditions were just right for them. Well, some species did have a good year – Small Whites *Pieris rapae* were prolific in July and August and could be seen in numbers across the region. Small Tortoiseshells *Aglais urtica* and Peacocks *Inachis io* also appeared in gardens at better levels than for the last few years.

But a fair proportion of the record forms that I received had comments along the lines of “can’t remember such a poor year, for both numbers and species”. These were mainly relating to garden records but, at some of the nature reserves, things were also looking worrying. Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* was very poor at Gait Barrows, with no butterflies reported from outside their core breeding area, and those that were seen within it are very much in accord with the number of pupae deposited from the captive breeding programme. Searches for signs of breeding after the flight season failed to find larvae, or definite signs of larval feeding damage (there were a couple of ‘possible’ plants).

Of our other rarities, High Brown Fritillary *Argynnis adippe* at Gait Barrows was well down on 2011, the last year when a decent transect was done and was generally down across the other reserves where it is normally found. Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Clossiana euphrosyne* was even worse, with lowest-ever counts at Gait Barrows where the total counted across

both transects was just 7. The future for these species is looking a bit bleak: High Brown is in its national stronghold in our area, and could do with at least holding its numbers rather than declining as badly as it has over the past few years.

Northern Brown Argus *Aricia artaxerxes* did well, with increases at Heald Brow (where the previous best count was knocked into a cocked hat), Eaves Wood, Myers Allotment (best count since 2004) and Gait Barrows. Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus* also increased well at Heysham, Eaves Wood and Myers Allotment. There were also some nice counts of Purple Hairstreak *Quercusia quercus*.

Large Heath *Coenonympha tullia* seemed to do quite well at Winmarleigh and Cockerham Mosses, but no-one appears to have visited the Goodber Common site. The proposed introduction to Heysham Moss gives us something to really look forward to in the near future.

Migrants were notably scarce. Red Admirals *Vanessa atalanta* were the best represented, and numbers were not too bad by September and October, but Painted Ladies *V. cardui* were very thin on the ground. And in what was reported in the press as a Clouded Yellow Year *Colias croceus* for Southern England, only 3 records of this species for the whole of Lancashire and Merseyside have so far been received.

Laura Sivell

Photo accompanying this is on page 15

Dragonflies in 2013

This was a difficult year. There was nothing wrong with the 2013 weather, but it does seem as though the conditions in 2012 had a knock-on effect and many species were in much reduced numbers (e.g. Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* and Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*) or absent (e.g. Ruddy darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*). It is a testimony to a few persistent recorders that we have something to report from the Lancashire section of our area, whilst the status of White-faced Darter *Leucorrhinia dubia* ‘over the border’ at Foulshaw is certainly looking very promising, with many observers easily seeing up to four individuals during June.

A strong colony of Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens* was located ‘off the beaten track’ along the River Conder, between Glasson and Galgate, with at least 100m of sightings and minimum of eight individuals (Sue and Finn Bugge). It was similarly recorded by Linda Renshaw along known sections of the lower River Keer. The very late spring led to similarly late emergence and resulted in Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma nymphula* overlapping with the more autumnal Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*. All our local damselflies were ‘available’ on the same late July/early August dates at e.g. Middleton.

There were five reports of Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea* in the Heysham area which has previously only known occasional individuals, and Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis* were reported as ‘numerous’ at several sites. The same could not be said for Migrant Hawker where there were especially low numbers in the Heysham/Middleton area and no reports of any significant numbers elsewhere.

The only other record worthy of individual note was a Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii* photographed at Middleton model boat pond on 19th July, but not seen subsequently.

Please can we have a really good search for Ruddy Darter in 2014 if the weather allows, starting with known (hopefully not former) sites such as Bankwell and Middleton

Thanks to Linda Renshaw, Sue and Finn Bugge, Dan Haywood, Mike Robinson, Johnny Scragg and Tony Riden for records. Sorry if I have missed anyone.

Pete Marsh

Shieldbugs

Once again, only a relatively small number of reports were received but they came from a wide area and represented a good variety of habitat.

Sloe Bugs *Dolycoris baccarum* were recorded on three sites, all coastal, and they are always worth looking for if you are in an area with sand dunes.

Green Shieldbugs *Palomena prasina* were mostly reported from gardens and allotments.

Forest Bugs *Pentatoma rufipes* were seen on several reserves as were *Picromerus bidens*. The latter have really sharp, pointed 'shoulders' like thorns, and orange legs. They are one of very few species in which the adults feed on moth

and butterfly larvae and occasionally leaf beetle larvae: most Shieldbugs suck sap. *P. bidens* seemed to have a good year in 2013. Forest bugs also have orange legs but their 'shoulders' are blunt and they have chequered edges to the body.

The most productive site visit was Linda Renshaw's to Hale Moss where 1 Green, 3 Forest and 7 *P. bidens* (one eating a caterpillar!) were recorded on the 10th September.

Thanks to everyone who sent in records.

Anne Smith.

Photo with this article is on page 15

Ladybirds

Ten species of Ladybird were recorded this year - one more than last. Records were noticeably slow to arrive due, no doubt, to the prolonged cold Spring we experienced.

Nevertheless, the earliest record was of a Cream-spot Ladybird *Calvia quattuordecimguttata* on a gatepost at Myers Allotment on 14th March. It must have been overwintering either in leaf litter or in a crevice in wood nearby. The last record to date was of a 7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*, again at Myers Allotment on 14 November. With the exception of a group of six 22-spot Ladybirds

Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata at Conder Green on 4th September, no noteworthy clusters of species were reported.

Among photographs sent to me was one of a Kidney-spot Ladybird *Chilocorus renipustulatus* found by Linda Renshaw at Foulshaw Moss and another of a Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* (*f. succinea*) found at home by Barbara Crooks. As far as I am aware, this is only the fifth Harlequin to have been recorded in North Lancashire. Barbara also sent me a photograph of a 10-spot Ladybird *Adalia decempunctata* (*f. decempustulatus*).

Mike Bloomfield

Bush-crickets, Grasshoppers, and Groundhoppers (Orthoptera) in 2013

Of the twenty-seven native British species within this group, the NLNG area and its immediate surroundings have twelve. This is a remarkably high proportion considering these insects are much more abundant and species - diverse in the south of England and in Europe: to some extent this reflects the diversity and quality of habitats in our area. The twelve species in question are illustrated here (see page x); all the photos are mine and were taken in Lancashire.

As expected, the earliest records of the season were of nymphs. The first was on May 22 when Linda Renshaw found a very small, early-stage Bog Bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera* at Foulshaw Moss. On June 5th, she found six Dark Bush-cricket nymphs *Pholidoptera griseoptera* on brambles at Arnside Knott (Heathwaite) and then a very small first instar Speckled Bush-cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima* at Silverdale on June 26th. Around this time (June 15th) I also found several nymphs of the Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus* at Latterbarrow NR. However, it was well into July before adults appeared in any great number and in general the season appeared to be late in arriving, probably due to the cold Spring weather.

Bog Bush-cricket distribution is restricted by habitat as they require acidic bogs to thrive but there are strong colonies in our area at Foulshaw and Winmarleigh/Cockerham Mosses. Like many species of Bush-cricket, they are difficult to locate unless you manage to pick up their stridulating call (bat detectors are almost essential) whilst to actually see one camouflaged amongst the heather is quite an achievement. At Foulshaw they were perhaps rather less frequent this year but good numbers were still recorded in August and September and as many as twenty were still calling as late as October 10th. Linda keeps a close watch on them at this site. At Winmarleigh/Cockerham Mosses, many were heard and several seen by a small group of observers on August 4th.

Dark Bush-crickets seem to be thriving in their one large but isolated colony on Heathwaite. During August and September they can be found relatively easily in sunny weather, sitting out on low growing brambles. Good numbers were seen and heard during this period by Linda and Allen Holmes and Linda noted 27 separate individuals calling even in mid-October. For anyone just wishing to see a Bush-cricket, Heathwaite is probably the best place to look.

Another local success is the Short-winged Conehead *Conocephalus discolor* which moved into the area relatively recently and is now frequent from the Fylde coast and the

(cont. on page 17)



Delicate (moth report)

J Girdley



Oak Nycetoline (moth report)

J Girdley



Netted Pug (moth report)

J Girdley



Pimpinel Pug (moth report)

J Girdley



Ringlet 'pallens' (butterfly report)

L Sivell



Picrometus bidens eating caterpillar (shieldbug report)

N Fieldhouse



Orthoptera: Bush-crickets, Grasshoppers and Groundhoppers present in v.c.60 (West Lancashire)



Dark Bush-cricket
(Pholidoptera griseoptera)
Heathwaite – August 2012



Speckled Bush-cricket
(Leptophyes punctatissima)
Silverdale – September 2012



Roesel's Bush-cricket
(Metrioptera roeselii)
Fleetwood – August 2013



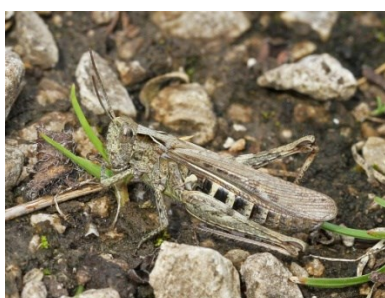
Bog Bush-cricket
(Metrioptera brachyptera)
Foulshaw Moss – September 2011



Oak Bush-cricket
(Meconema thalassinum)
Preston – August 2013



Short-winged Conehead
(Conocephalus dorsalis)
Carnforth – September 2013



Field Grasshopper
(Chorthippus brunneus)
Warton Crag – September 2012



Common Green Grasshopper
(Omocestus viridulus)
Latterbarrow – July 2012



Meadow Grasshopper
(Chorthippus parallelus)
Foulshaw Moss – August 2012



Mottled Grasshopper
(Myrmeleotettix maculatus)
Warton Crag – September 2012



Slender Groundhopper
(Tetrix subulata)
Preston – May 2012



Common Groundhopper
(Tetrix undulata)
Ainsdale – May 2012

All photos © *Michael Foley*

Lune estuary, northwards to several places around Morecambe Bay and even further north. They favour the salt-marsh habitat and in good weather males call from patches of rush even close to the high-water level. Their call is harsh and persistent but easily picked up on the detector and, once recognised, this is a convenient method of recording them. By carefully searching amongst the rushes they can also be seen but they have a habit of hiding on the far side of the stems and are then difficult to spot. At Carnforth, I saw good populations on several occasions in late summer and even heard one calling there after overnight frost and a high tide on November 4th. At Pott's Corner on the Lune estuary, on August 8th, Linda Renshaw heard many calling and also had sight of several, including nymphs.

The Speckled Bush-cricket appears to be limited to a relatively small area near Eaves Wood, Silverdale. It occurs there at the woodland margin and in scrub but is also present in the nearby gardens just below. Being a very isolated colony, it is possible that it may have originated here by horticultural means, accidentally introduced from outside the area when nursery plants were bought – but this is speculation of course. These are especially difficult crickets to see as they quickly drop into the vegetation when approached. The call is an intermittent click made every few seconds (again, a bat detector is almost essential for finding them) and, even when located down to a range of only a few feet, they are extremely hard to spot against the similarly-coloured green leaves. On August 20th, Linda Renshaw photographed an adult which had a peculiar, large swelling on its head, possibly caused by a parasite. As they mature, the adults tend to move up into the trees and are then even more difficult to find. Allen Holmes, however, was pleased to photograph an early stage nymph at ground level in mid-August and he also heard several adults calling in the trees above. Numbers here were possibly fewer than last year but two males were still active and calling when heard by Linda on October 19th, although none were located on returning to the same spot on October 24th.

Although the above species is difficult to locate, it is relatively easy compared to the Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum*. These secretive insects don't stridulate but communicate by tapping their feet on the oak leaves. They are also nocturnal and spend most of the time high in the trees. There are two places locally where they have been seen in the past but each of these lacked recent records until this year - at Arnside Knott and Red Scar Woods, near Preston. Because of this, a firm effort to re-find them was made this year. At Heathwaite, on August 16, after a long, concentrated search, Allen Holmes was successful in finding and photographing an adult female on an oak there. By coincidence, on the same day, a resident of Arnside also found one on the door-step of his house. These two spots are probably only two kilometres apart so, despite them being secretive, it suggests that they occur there over a wider area than was first thought. Following several unsuccessful searches by the Ribble at Preston, I finally located and photographed (see page xxx) a male on an oak tree on the

fringe of Red Scar Woods. This appears to be the first record of an adult here for more than a decade, although being so difficult to find they will be under-recorded.

The sixth of our local Bush-cricket species is Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii*. In this area though, it can only be found along a bank of brambles, a hedgerow, and a track-side near Fleetwood. Access to the site has been restricted recently but Allen Holmes picked up several calling individuals on his bat detector on September 3rd. This is an extremely isolated population, the closest one being in south Yorkshire. As with the Speckled Bush-cricket at Silverdale, it may have been introduced here by chance and then adapted to a habitat which suits it.

Unfortunately, the grasshoppers have been very much under-recorded this year despite them being much easier than crickets to locate. Bill Gregory found a nymph of the Common Green at Brockholes, Preston, on June 25th and saw a Field Grasshopper *Chorthippus brunneus* there on July 5th. At Carnforth Iron Works, Linda Renshaw photographed Field Grasshoppers in July and August and saw another one at Heysham NR on September 3rd. She also photographed a Common Green at Hale Moss on September 10th. On Heathwaite in mid-August, Allen Holmes heard both of these species calling in good numbers and found a large colony of Field Grasshoppers on the dunes near Fairhaven on September 3rd. I photographed a Meadow Grasshopper *Chorthippus parallelus* at Foulshaw Moss on September 10th but this was the only record for the year. Unfortunately there were no records of Mottled Grasshopper *Myrmeleotettix maculatus* but no doubt it is still present at several sites and is under-recorded as is the Meadow Grasshopper. Places to look for the Mottled are in very short vegetation in more or less open areas.

Lastly, a Common Groundhopper *Tetrix undulata* was found by Linda Renshaw at Hale Moss on September 10 and, much earlier in the year, I found five Slender Groundhoppers *Tetrix subulata* on damp earth at Brockholes near Preston on May 26.

Unfortunately, we are very short of Orthoptera recorders. Only five people have provided records this year, three of whom live outside the area. Thanks go to them for their efforts and especially to Linda Renshaw for her detailed records and interesting observations. Orthoptera is a very interesting group of insects which provide a challenge to locate and much satisfaction when achieved. The twelve species most likely to be found locally are shown on page 16. If any reader sees any of these, do please send in your records and, if unsure of the identity, perhaps take a photo and send that too. Please give the locality, date, the number seen (and the Grid Reference if possible). This year's records have already been sent to the national Orthoptera Recording Scheme.

Michael Foley

Amphibians and Reptiles

Ambibians

I only received a few records from members. Brian Townson had 42 Frogs *Rana temporaria* and frogspawn in his garden pond at Torrisholme on the 18th February, but a cold snap a few days later froze the frogspawn solid. By the 30th April, Brian had lots of tadpoles but he also found some very thin, dead adult Frogs in his pond. In early Spring, there was a lot less frogspawn than usual in local ponds.

In March, I saw frogspawn dripping off the viewing platform at Foulshaw Moss NR for the second year running. This year it was on the handrail, and I would love to know which raptor had perched there to eat its 'frog dinners'.

On our Roeburndale field trip in April, we passed a cottage with a large pond next to the road leading down to Wray village. The owner said he had had very few Frogs this year because the Herons had eaten them all, but that he had hundreds of Toads *Bufo bufo*.

I was surprised to see the middle of the Landscape strip pond on Heysham NR seething with toadpoles/tadpoles on the 10th June, which is very late indeed.

A notice which was posted at Middleton NR on the 11th June stated that 367 Great-crested Newts *Triturus cristatus*, 440 Smooth Newts *T. vulgaris*, 376 Toads and 164 Frogs had been relocated within the reserve as part of the Duddon Offshore Windfarm Project. I always believed toads were much rarer than frogs, but this count lends weight to my recent suspicions that they may now be outnumbering frogs.

I saw large numbers of juvenile toads in August at Middleton NR, Gaitbarrows NR and Middleton Quarry. Being so palatable must put the Frog at a distinct disadvantage in the survival stakes whereas, when threatened, the Common Toad produces a distasteful white secretion which deters most predators but doesn't seem to affect Grass Snakes *Natrix natrix*. They may eat 5-8 Toads a year.

Great-crested Newts appear to be very well established on both sides of the road at Middleton NR. Outside the breeding season, the male's crests are reabsorbed, but Great-crested Newts can still be easily identified by their dark body colour and the orange rings on their toes.

Smooth Newts were recorded at Middleton and Heysham Nature Reserves.

Palmate Newts *T. helveticus* were recorded at Middlebarrow Quarry, Warton Crag Quarry, Trowbarrow Quarry and Leighton Moss, where they sit on the paths at night in hot weather. Please take a torch if you are leaving the hides when the light is fading, so you don't step on them.

Reptiles

I have no reports of Grass Snakes in our local area but on the 14th June a juvenile was found under a stone at the Brown Robin NR (Grange-over-Sands) on a Wildlife Trust field outing.

Grass Snakes swim well and often hunt in water where they can remain submerged for 30 minutes. Their diet consists predominantly of frogs and toads, although newts, tadpoles

and fish are occasionally taken along with small mammals, nesting birds, other snakes and slugs. On the 23rd of May, I saw a group of 12 Grass Snakes at Haybridge NR in Cumbria where there is a thriving population.

I have no reports of Adders *Vipera berus* from North Lancashire. They seem to have all but disappeared apart from certain areas within the Trough of Bowland. Martin Sherlock saw one disappearing into a mousehole on the 11th October near Bigland Hall in Cumbria.

Last winter, I read a book entitled "The Silver Dale" by William Riley (published 1932). The author mentioned that in olden times when Leighton Hall at Warton was a timbered building, the owners deliberately imported some Peacocks, not for their aesthetic beauty, but for their love of a diet of 'hagworms' (Adders). Apparently, they did their job well and cleared the area around the house of Adders.

Despite their poisonous bite, Adders have numerous predators including Pheasants, Crows, Buzzards, Ravens, Hedgehogs and Badgers. What with loss of habitat and an ever increasing number of predators (with the exception of the Hedgehog), the Adder's future is looking very bleak.

Slow Worms *Anguis fragilis* continue to be fairly common within the AONB, with smaller populations within the surrounding areas. Unfortunately, the motor car takes its toll. In July, I found one dead on the road near Clawthorpe NR and another squashed on the road outside the RSPB Visitor Centre at Leighton Moss in August. I saw a healthy one on Heathwaite (Arnside Knott) in July and another on Gaitbarrows NR at the end of August. Further afield, Slow Worms were also seen at Roudsea Wood NR, Haybridge, NR and Fouldshaw Moss NR, where we saw 3 on our field trip in May.

Common Lizards *Zootoca vivipara* appeared at their usual locations from mid-April onwards: my first record was of one on the boardwalk at Haweswater (Silverdale). Odd ones turned up on Heathwaite (Arnside Knott) and several at the Plain Quarry at Burton, although I thought numbers there were down on previous years. On the 23rd of July, I was pleased to see one sunbathing on a log at Heysham Moss NR. This is my first record of a Common Lizard from this site.

Seeing ticks on lizards is becoming a more common occurrence. This year, I noticed this at Haweswater (Silverdale) and Foulshaw (Cumbria). It made me wonder, how large a body burden of ticks a lizard can cope with before it becomes debilitated?

During many hours of watching Bog Bush-crickets at Foulshaw Moss NR, I have seen Common Lizards eating moths and spiders they have caught in the heather. In August, my son photographed one eating a grasshopper on the boardwalk. This lizard had a tick above its right front leg.

Thank you to those who have sent records. Please let me know if you see Grass Snakes or Adders. All records welcome.

Linds Renshaw.

Accompanying photos are on page 23

Fish

Many rivers on the east coast of England had good Salmon runs this year but a lot of west coast rivers, including the R. Lune, were poor.

There were some good fish amongst the early spring Salmon and the summer grilse run has been better than the previous 2 years. (Grilse are Salmon that have spent one winter at sea, or are returning the same year in the autumn following the spring they went to sea). Late autumn fish were scarce with the hatchery group struggling to get brood stock.

On the 1st of December, I saw a large, diseased cock Salmon in the R. Lune just above Wenning Foot. The majority of Salmon die of exhaustion after spawning, with many succumbing to fungal infections: only 4-6% survive to spawn a second time.

In contrast, the R. Lune had a good run of Sea Trout this year. Local rivers also had a good run of Elvers.

The R. Lune also holds fair numbers of Coarse Fish in both the main river and in backwaters which are connected to it in times of flood. In May, I wandered along the backwaters below Higher Broomfield Farm at Arkholme just as the Water Lilies were starting to grow on the bottom of the ponds. Fish swimming above the light coloured pads were easily visible and I spotted 6 large Pike plus 2 smaller ones.

Numbers of Brown Trout seem to be improving on the R. Keer and some Sea Trout were seen but redds were few and far between at spawning time. Redds are troughs made in the gravel on the river bed in which the trout deposit their eggs. Some further improvement work is to be undertaken on the middle reaches of the river.

Around Britain's coastline, the government has designated 31 of the 127 sites recommended by the Wildlife Trusts as Marine Reserves. There will be just one, Fylde Offshore, off the coast of Lancashire and North Merseyside, with another 4 further out in the Irish Sea. Following the consultation process, the government will announce whether or not they have been adopted.

I think offshore wind farms may also have inadvertently created sanctuaries in the sea, as I hear that lobster numbers are increasing significantly around Walney Island. It's also possible that the 'no go' areas around the wind turbines may be providing safe feeding grounds for the better quality Plaice now being caught on rod and line in Morecambe Bay.

As well as catching the usual Whiting, Codling and Flatfish, anglers have taken some good sized Bass. Sea Bass up to 7 pounds were caught from Jack Scout at Silverdale, and a superb 12 pound specimen was taken by a local angler near Conder Green on the Lune estuary.

Linda Renshaw

Birds

This was a very interesting year with the highlights including a long-staying Bonaparte's Gull at Heysham Power Station outfalls and the appearance of two drift migrants, more associated with the east coast, in the form of singing male Marsh Warbler (Middleton NR) and singing 1CY male Common Rosefinch (Whitendale) on 10th June. After what seemed weeks and weeks of inclement winds, a change to a light north-westerly on 6th April led to a wintering Bittern migration spectacular at Leighton Moss, with five definitely spiralling up and leaving, and a further three probably doing so – all this happening with the background of a strongly booming local male. A female Lesser Scaup graced Borwick Waters from 14th April to 6th May but, perhaps more unusual in the wildfowl stakes, there was an unprecedented flock of 420 Common Scoter on the sea off the well-watched Heysham on 6th January.

The first winter period was dominated in the interest stakes by the remainder of the huge Waxwing invasion and one was even seen as late as 1st May. A Spoonbill on the Lune Estuary 10th-12th February was most unseasonal. Wildfowl sightings included a Bean Goose on Aldcliffe Marsh on 19^h January, a continuation of punching above our weight (compared to the national decline) with up to 19 Bewick's Swan and at least one Smew at Lune Estuary sites. Other winter/early spring sightings included single Iceland Gulls at Pine Lake (30th January) and Glasson (11th March).

The spring seabird passage through Morecambe Bay was dominated by periods of unseasonable, strong onshore winds. This appeared to disrupt the normal migratory flow and Arctic Tern, for example, appeared earlier than usual,

but the weather saw them using Morecambe Bay as a recuperation area before further migration. Therefore, we were not sure how many individuals passed through this year and referred to the status as '2,167 bird-days'. At the same time, the same weather appeared to "dump" a significant proportion of the Irish Sea wintering Little Gull into the bay just before they were ready to properly migrate, with daily counts reaching 140. The skua passage was unremarkable, although strong onshore winds do always allow the possibility of Long-tailed Skua and this duly happened with one off Heysham on 13th May, and a flock of 5 reported at Jenny brown's Point on 23rd May

Scarce local breeding birds had a mixed season. Hen Harriers reached the food-passing stage and then 'disappeared' and Wood Warbler gave tantalising possibilities of breeding (or at least resident singing male) at two sites. All others were one-day passage birds, and the presence of at least two pairs of Cetti's Warbler at Leighton Moss was not reflected in any autumnal captures of juveniles as part of the ringing programme. On the more positive side, there were probably 18 pairs of Bearded Tit producing at least 49 young, and Avocets did very well due to anti-predator measures with a maximum of 71 at Leighton Moss and 'decent' productivity.

Odds and ends during the spring period included a Black-throated Diver off Heysham on 11^h April, a Great Northern Diver off Heysham on 10th May, a Corncrake heard at Aldcliffe on 6th May, an early lowland Dotterel at Cockersands on 16th April, a Temminck's Stint at Conder on 27-28th May, a Green-winged Teal at Leighton Moss 29th April to 2nd May, a Hoopoe found by a dog in Upper Hindburndale 2nd-4th May, a male Red-backed Shrike at Leighton Moss on 27th June, a male Serin seen briefly at Cockerham Sands car park on 27th

April, two Water Pipit at Conder in late March/early April and a White Stork of unknown origin seen twice in late April/early May in the Leighton/Yealand area.

Midsummer records of interest included up to 46 Mediterranean Gulls, with ringed birds from Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Poland and France around Heysham power station outfalls.

One species which traversed all the season and produced record numbers was Black Redstart. One was at Carnforth Slag Tips from 10th February-19th March and another was at Langden water works on 12th April. The remainder were all in the Heysham area with 5-6 individuals, including an adult male in late spring, and again the autumn/winter suggested they may have bred. They can be very elusive in private land with a lot of nooks and crannies!

Autumnal sightings of interest included a displaced flock of 17 Greenland White-fronted Geese at Cocksands on 17th October, a Long-tailed Duck taking up residence at Leighton Moss from 30th October and a lengthy stay by a Garganey away from Leighton Moss at Conder Pool 3rd September-1st October. Pectoral Sandpipers appeared at Leighton Moss 9th-14th September, with two on the latter date and on the Kent

Estuary on 1st October. Great White Egret were recorded at four sites from 29th September to 10th December, with no overlapping dates; therefore, perhaps, one bird. Glossy Ibis, on the other hand, saw a flock of 12 through Leighton Moss on 27th September increase to 13 later in the day on the Kent Estuary, then a series of smaller flocks for the next few days. Autumnal land-bird records saw a very obliging Firecrest at Heysham Harbour 27th-29th October, a more elusive singleton around Leighton from 12th November, and up to three Lapland Bunting in Cocksands stubble on at least 18th October, with another flying south at Sunderland on 24th October. Yellow-browed Warblers were seen at Cocksands on 2nd October and between 2-4 elusive ones in the Heysham area from late September to 18th October.

Extremely wet and mild weather at the end of the year saw few surprises other than an Iceland Gull at Heysham/Middleton 1st-11th December, and a predictable influx of up to 86 Little Gulls at the end of the year during stormy conditions.

Pete Marsh

Photos are on page 23

Recorders 2013-2014

Herbaceous Plants, Shrubs, Trees	Martin Sherlock	01524 66131	martin@phytophile.me.uk
Ferns, Clubmosses, Horse-tails	Trevor Pearce	01524 67500	t.pearce@lancaster.ac.uk
Lichens	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
Mammals inc. Bats	Steve Bradley	01524 33056	bradfamilly@btinternet.com
Amphibians, Reptiles, Fish	Linda Renshaw	01524 733036	
Moths	John Girdley	01524 419234	john@birdtours.co.uk
Butterflies	Laura Sivell	01524 69248	laura.sivell@mypostoffice.co.uk
Birds, Dragonflies	Peter Marsh	07532 433043	pmrsh123@aol.com
Orthoptera	Michael Foley	01254 248083	m.foley@lancaster.ac.uk
Shield Bugs	Anne Smith	01253 884378	wainscot@hotmail.co.uk
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 these details:-

Recorder's name, species, grid reference (ideally 2 letters and 6 figures e.g. SD486605) with place name (e.g. Lancaster) and date. The A4 **NLNG 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.

Field Meetings

Roeburndale, April 20th

Our first field trip of the year was led by Linda Renshaw and Martin Sherlock who were met by a large group of 16 people, all eager to begin the walk which started from Wray. Having parked up at Bridge House Tea Rooms (with permission) we set off in lovely sunshine back over the bridge and took the minor road following the bank of the River Roeburn south. A Dipper was immediately spotted flying low over the water and through the bridge. Bumblebees *Bombus terrestris* and *B. pascuorum* were busy amongst the spring flowers and birdsong filled the air. Soon the road left the river and began to climb. The steep, wet roadside bank was rich in mosses, ferns, lichens and liverworts and we took advantage of every opportunity to pause and examine them as the road grew steeper (we were fortunate in having several keen botanists in the group).

Eventually, we emerged from the wooded valley onto the ridge and turned west across rushy fields to begin an angled descent through old woodland to the narrow floodplain. Here, a convenient fallen tree made a good lunch spot whilst two 'late' arrivals were able to catch us up. An orchard had been established here by the local landowner, the species names clearly labelled on the trees. Linda was able to show us a Badger *Meles meles* footprint and we were visited by a mystery raptor which didn't stay long enough to be identified. Peacock *Inachis io* and Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* Butterflies were on the wing and a White-legged Millipede *Tachypodiulus niger* was identified. David Earl led several of us back into the woodland to show us the flower *Adoxa moschatellina*: it is not closely related to other plants, so is in a family of its own *Adoxaceae*.

We crossed the river by a footbridge and each tackled the steep ascent at their own speed. Luckily it was only short and there was lots of interest on the way.

Our route then took us across open moorland with wonderful views in every direction and even the haunting call of Curlews to accompany us. We followed Moor Lane north and found a queen wasp *Vespula* sp. and a very obliging Stonefly, later identified from a photograph by Steve Garland as a female *Perlodes microcephala*. We were just about to fork right down to Wray when a cry went up! Urgent action was needed to rescue Toads *Bufo bufo* mating in a flooded cattle

grid from which there was no escape! Linda leapt into action and tragedy was averted. Sadly things had not gone so well for dozens of Frogs *Rana temporaria* squashed on the road further on.

Arriving in Wray, spirits were lifted by the prospect of tea and/or ice cream at the Tea rooms. Linda and Martin were thanked for leading us on this spring walk - an excellent start to the group's programme for 2013.

List of some of the recorded species not already named in the article.

Ferns

Maidenhair spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes*, Black spleenwort *A. adiatum-nigrum*, Hartstongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, Hard Shield Fern *Blechnum spicant*, Common polypody *Polypodium* sp.

Rushes

Field Wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, Hairy Wood-rush *L. pilosa*, Great Wood-rush *L. sylvatica*.

Mosses

Homolothecium sericeum, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Mnium hornum*, *Atrichum undulatum*.

Liverworts

Conocephalum conicum, *Metzgeria furcata*, *M. Fruticulosa*

Lichens

Parmelia subrudecta, *Ramalina farinacea*, *Usnea subfloridana*, *Xanthoria parietina*, *Peltigera* sp.

Flowering Plants

Butterbur *Petasites hybridus*, Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Early Dog Violet *Viola reichenbachiana*, Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Dogs Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*, Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysplenium oppositifolium*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*.

Anne Smith

Photos can be seen on pages 23 and 24

Foulshaw Moss, May 22nd

On a sunny, mid-week morning, a small group met in this well known CWT Reserve's car parking area. Linda Renshaw, who was leading the field trip, knows this site well and had chosen late May as a possible time when the White-faced Darters *Leucorrhinia dubia* (a rare, recently introduced species which breeds in peat bogs) may have emerged. There was, however, much more waiting to be explored and we set off towards the viewing platform situated at the end of a water logged track. The platform provides excellent views over the reserve and, as one person had brought along his telescope, we were able to observe the distant group of Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* very clearly. Linda pointed out a white deer amongst the small herd which were gathered under the distant trees - an aberration. Ospreys can sometimes be seen here as they fly over the area, but that morning we had to be content with Greylag Geese, Swifts and Buzzards.

Leaving the platform, we walked along the boardwalk crossing the Moss. A lot of regeneration work involving heavy machinery had been carried out on Foulshaw over the winter months, and it seemed to have taken its toll on these wooden walkways which were in a poor state. We had to look carefully where we put our feet as wooden planks were often missing or broken, but our eyes were drawn to the numbers of Green Hairstreaks *Callophrys rubi* flying around the birch saplings growing alongside the walkway. It was a delight to watch these small butterflies with their beautifully coloured wings. The Moss was dotted with Common Cotton *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Harestail-Grass *E. vaginatum* and we admired the pretty Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* plants. There was plenty of bird life around and members of the group who were keen birders helped us to identify Reed Bunting, House Martin and the Lesser Redpoll (making its distinctive telephone-like trill). Several caterpillars of the Drinker Moth *Euthrix potatoria* were found and a Green Tiger Beetle *Cicindela campestris*. Two Common Lizards *Zootoca vivipara* were found basking on the boardwalk; a young one and a gravid female.

As we turned to walk towards another part of the Reserve, we spotted the unusual sight of a wheelbarrow suspended

quite high in the branches of a tree. Puzzled, we could only conclude that some workmen had put it there for safety with the use of a crane and would retrieve it in due course. We continued along a track edged with spring flowers including Cowslips *Primula veris*, Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*, Crosswort *Cruciata laevipes*, Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea* and Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*. Green veined Whites *Pieris napi* and Peacocks *Inachis io* were flying, but we did not linger long here as Linda was keen to look under several metal sheets nearby. We were rewarded with 3 Slow Worms *Anguis fragilis*, 2 Glow Worm Larvae *Lampyrus noctiluca*, a Common Frog *Rana temporaria* and several Toads *Bufo bufo*. A large black beetle walked out from under one of the sheets but we failed to catch it for identification.

We walked slowly along the edge of a few of the pools and ditches back to the car park, looking at some of the aquatic creatures living there. Linda rescued a tiny cricket, an early-stage Bog Bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera*, which her keen eyes had spotted struggling in the water.

By this time it was past midday and some of the group had to leave. As the sunny weather continued, Linda and I stayed to have our picnic on a seat beside one of the pools and we were rewarded with the sight of several Four-Spotted Chasers *Libellula depressa* and male Orange Tips *Anthocaris cardamines*. Before leaving the Reserve ourselves, we walked down to the observation platform again, finding the distinctively marked beetle *Rhagium bifasciatum* on one of the timber legs and the Pine Weevil *Hylobius abietis* in the conifers at the side of the track. Walking back to our cars, we stopped to look at the notice board and to our surprise found that someone had pinned a White faced Darter there (hopefully it was dead when found and before being pinned). We thought that someone might have put it there to show people that it had emerged on the reserve - perhaps just on that day. A couple had arrived at the same time as we had that morning and we had seen them exploring further into the Moss: perhaps it was they who had left the specimen?

Linda was thanked for leading this walk which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Myers Allotment, July 11th

Myers Allotment is in the parish of Silverdale, at the junction of Slackwood Lane and Row Lane. It is the first reserve to be run by Butterfly Conservation in north-west England. Like much of the area, it was grazing land from time immemorial but in the twentieth century was abandoned and allowed to run to scrub. There are, however, still glades separating the thickets and the rare High Brown Fritillary *Argynnis adippe* can still be found here. The site is leased from Leighton Hall Estate, initially for a 5 year period. In the autumn and winter, work parties are busy on the site coppicing and reducing the scrub with the intention of increasing the numbers of High Brown and hopefully attracting other rare butterflies.

A large group of us met at Leighton Moss on a sunny morning, before walking the short distance to the reserve and entering through a gateway located on The Row. We were being shown around the reserve by Dave Wrigley, Voluntary Reserves Officer for the North Lancashire Branch of Butterfly Conservation. This was my first visit to the reserve, which is open to the public, and as the mosaic of trees and glades makes it a confusing place for a novice, I was glad to have a guide just to find my way about.

Despite assiduous searching, we never found a High Brown but there were Northern Brown Argus *Aricia artaxerxes* on the wing, and you don't see those every

(Continued on page 25)



Common lizard eating a grasshopper (amphibians and reptiles)

J Renshaw



Firecrest (bird report)

S Parrott



Grass snake (amphibians and reptiles)

L Renshaw



Bonaparte's gull (bird report)

M Watson



Stonefly (Roeburndale meeting)

P Ross



Dipper (Roeburndale meeting)

D Poole



Dragonfly larva (Bioblitz at Fauna meeting)

B Crooks



Figwort Sawfly (Bioblitz at Fauna meeting)

R Zloch



Linda at Sowerholme Ponds (Bioblitz at Fauna meeting)

B Crooks



Roe Deer (Myers allotment meeting)

H Smith



Centipede *Henia vesuviana*

J Holding

day. Other insects included the longhorn beetle *Rutella maculata* (see article by Mike Bloomfield).

There is still plenty of the old limestone grassland vegetation, including Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Downy Oat-grass *Avenula (Helictotrichon) pubescens*, Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, Common Gromwell *Lithospermum officinale* and Limestone Bedstraw *Galium sternerii*. These have been joined by invasive plants like Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg, Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata* and False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* as well as woodland species like various ferns, Enchanter's Nightshade

Circaea lutetiana and Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*. In all I recorded about 90 species of plant, which isn't bad for 7 hectares.

This reserve is well worth a visit and is open throughout the year for public access.

We thanked Dave Wrigley for showing us this small gem and also Anne Smith and Mike Bloomfield for helping to organise the field outing.

Martin Sherlock

Photo on page 24

Cockerham Moss, August 4th

Reuben had agreed to lead a group of us around the Moss; an area difficult to access without prior knowledge. Permits are currently needed to go onto the reserve and these can be obtained from Heysham NR. Because of local road works, it was decided that we should meet at the Patten Arms and then proceed in several cars to the farm at Counce Grange, from where we could easily walk to the Moss. The farmer had taken over the tenancy at about the same time that LWT took over the management of the reserve and had been helpful about arranging parking for access.

The weather was cloudy but dry as 9 of us set off from the farm. We immediately spotted a Brown Hare *Lepus capensis* sitting in the middle of a farm track watching us, seemingly unperturbed by our arrival. Walking down the side of the first field, we were accompanied by a friendly group of young black and white cows, obviously hoping we were going to feed them. A ditch separated us from the fields to the left and the botanists among us soon began spotting a number of plants. These included:- Penny Cress *Thlaspi arvense*, Water-pepper *Polygonum hydropiper*, Large Hemp Nettle *Galeopsis speciosa*, Red Dead Nettle *Lamium purpureum*, Fat Hen *Chenopodium album* and Celery Leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*. Common Couch Grass *Elymus repens* was growing amongst the barley crop in the second field where we spotted the micro moth, Pale Straw Pearl *Udea lutealis* as well as a Silver Y Moth *Autographa gamma*. A Buzzard flew overhead but there weren't many birds about at all that day.

A wide ditch separated the Moss from the farm fields and some of the more athletic of us jumped across whilst others chose the easier alternative of walking along the side of the ditch until it petered out. Wandering through some trees into this first part of the reserve, we found Purple Moor Grass *Molinia caerulea* and Wavy Hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, whilst further into the Moss were Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos*, Common Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Harestail Cotton Grass *E. vaginatum*, Narrow Buckler Fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*, and Cross Leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*. Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale*, Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, Marsh Willow Herb *Epilobium palustre* and Sundew (Family - *Droseraceae*) (it was *Drosera*

rotundifolia) were found amongst the clumps of wiry Heather *Calluna vulgaris* which, here in this first area, had been devoured by the Heather Beetle *Lochmaea suturalis*. New green tips were already developing but it amazed us to see how much damage these small creatures could cause.

The sun came out and it became much warmer with no evidence of the forecast rain. Butterflies flew about and we recorded Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*, Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*, Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*, Large White *Pieris brassicae* and Peacock *Inachis io*, whilst Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba*, and numerous Straw Dot Moths *Picromarus bidens* were also on the wing. Searching amongst the sphagnum mosses, Reuben found the Bog Bead-moss *Aulacomnium palustre*, an attractive, whitish feather moss. Jeremy Steeden, who has visited the Moss on a number of occasions, found the spiders *Theridion sisyphium*, *Araneus diadematus*, *Larinioides cornutus* (banded legs) and *Enoplognatha* (it's egg ball encased in a web on the underside of a beech leaf). The Common Groundhopper *Tetrix undulata* and Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus* were also added to our list of species. Linda Renshaw and her friend Roz tried to catch Bog Bush-crickets *Metrioptera brachyptera* whose song they were able to identify through the signals on their bat detector, but to no avail.

Following a picnic lunch amongst the heather, 4 members returned to their cars whilst the remainder continued to explore further into the Moss, heading towards the main dyke and a small wooded area. This part of the Moss had more grassy areas and the heather here had escaped the extensive beetle damage. Care had to be taken when walking as the ground was crisscrossed with ridges where ditches had been dug out some time ago: these were difficult to see because they were now covered by grass and heather. We pondered over the remains of the severed wing feathers of a Pheasant, wondering if the predator could have been a Fox. A Spiked Shield Bug *Picromerus bidens* and a Harvestman *Mitopus morio* (F) were found in a hedgerow of trees: a large Dragonfly flew by, but too fast for us to identify accurately. Reuben was keen to show us several groups of Royal Ferns *Osmunda regalis* which were well established in the middle of the small wooded area - a surprising find in such a place. They are unusual looking

ferns, and their fertile central leaves (thickly covered in spores) had turned golden brown (pale green at first) resembling a flower spike of a flowering plant. Their name befits them well as they are one of the tallest European ferns. Broad Buckler Fern *Dryopteris dilatata* was also growing here and a large Hoop Fungus *Fomes fomentarius* was found on a Birch tree.

As we retraced our steps, we again spotted a number of Bog Bush-crickets in an open grassy area and several of us were able to photograph individuals and capture one or two of them in pots. Numbers of Peacocks were still flying and we found a Forest Shield Bug *Pentatoma rufipes* with its

projecting 'shoulders'. Our last find of the day was made by Reuben - a male Scorpion Fly, Family *Panorpidae*. Apparently there are 3 British species, but they are impossible to distinguish without examining the genitalia under a microscope. As the sky darkened we thought it best to take the shortest way back; all of us managing to leap over the wide ditch.

We all thanked Reuben for giving up his time on a Sunday to lead us around this very interesting Moss,

Barbara Crooks

Bioblitz at Fauna, September 8th

Despite the pessimistic weather forecast, the weather remained dry, calm and mild during our second visit this summer to the Fairfield Association Urban Nature Reserve in Lancaster. Chris Workman led the event, meeting us at the entrance to the Fairfield Community Orchard, sited at the end of a short lane leading from Sunnyside Road. We had a brief look at the trees in the Orchard, now laden with fruit, and decided to return after we had completed our survey.

Carrying a variety of nets and pots, nine of us walked along the well fenced paths and into the meadow field. On the way we stopped to look at the map on the notice board and Chris described how the site had developed in the last few years, pointing out the most recent acquisitions of the fields which now form an additional area known as Flora. Together with Fauna, these fields now comprise 47 acres of land close to the centre of Lancaster, "providing an environment where wildlife can flourish through conservation and traditional farming practices." The new fields now extend the area of the reserve as far as the canal at Aldcliffe.

The meadow grasses had recently been cut and baling had taken place only the day before. Leaving some of our equipment at the side of the meadow, we climbed over a stile into the area known as Sowerholm where there are several pools. A Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea* and a male Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* were flying as we made our way to the portable moth trap which Chris had left there the night before. We weren't expecting to find much because of very heavy rain during the night, but we found a Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba*, and a Caddis Fly which flew off before we could attempt further identification.

We moved to the area around the larger pool and Linda used her net to produce many specimens which could then be examined closely. The pool appeared to be healthy and rich in wildlife. Chris told us that he had been concerned about the quality of the water earlier in the summer when there had been a hot, dry spell. A number of larvae were found of Mayfly, Caddis Fly, non-biting Midge larvae (Family *Chironomidae*), Damselfly larvae and the large Dragonfly larvae - all were carefully studied and then returned to the water. There was plenty of Daphnia in the water; the small plant life which is underpins the food chain in the pond.

Other specimens included Water Shrimps *Gammarus pulex*, Hoglice *Ascellus aquaticus*, Ramshorn Snails (Family *Planorbidae*) and the spiral shaped snail (Family *Limnardiidae*). I learnt that the Pond Skater *Gerris lacustris*, Common Backswimmer/Water Boatman *Notonecta glauca* and Lesser Water Boatman *Corixa punctata* are all True Bugs. The Whirligig Beetle *Gyrinus natator* is well named and fascinating to watch as it zoomed around the water: its eye is made up of two parts, one half looking down into the water and the other across the surface - how useful for a predator!

Our attention turned to the grassy area around the pools, using the sweep nets to search. Common Blue Damselflies *Enallagma cyathigerum* were flying and a Caddisfly was caught and identified as belonging to the family *Limnephilidae*, probably *marmoratus* species. Several Craneflies were also caught; one confirmed as *Tipula paludosa* (after much deliberating in ID books and examining with lenses). Much to our delight, a large Dragonfly excuvia was found, whilst Brown Hawkers *Aeshna grandis* flew to and fro, displaying their aeronautical skills. A Small China mark Moth *Cataclysta leminata* was caught and Anne Smith told us how the caterpillars of this species feed on pondweed. There were numerous Spiders but most were difficult to identify because of their immaturity. Chris, however, was able to identify some, including the Comb-footed spider *Enoplognatha thoracica*, *Tetragnatha extensa* and *Pachygnatha degeeri* (the latter two, both Long-jawed orb weavers).

Eventually, we climbed back into the meadow where we ate our picnic, and as the weather remained fair, we decided to continue to search the margins of the field for a little while longer. There was plenty to find including a beetle belonging to the Family *Cryptophagidae* which feeds on fungi. Anne was able to confirm 5 species of Hoverflies: - Marmalade Hoverfly *Episyrus balteatus*, Chequered Hoverfly *Melanostroma scalare*, *Heliophilus pendulus*, *Melanostroma mellinim* and *Melanostroma scalare*. We were able to identify an Ichneuman fly, *Amblyteles armatorius*, as well as the Figwort sawfly *Tentredo scophulariae* (not surprisingly there was a plentiful supply of Figwort nearby). The Forest Shield Bug *Pentatoma Rufipes* was found in the Hawthorn along the hedgerow and we stumbled across a caterpillar of

the Drinker Moth *Euthrix potatoria* and a Silver Y Moth *Autographa gamma*.

The clouds began to gather and darken and so we decided to make our way back to the orchard before the rain began.

There, we found 2 Micro moths; Pale Straw Pearl *Udea lutealis* and the Nettle-tap Moth *Anthophila fabriciana*, as well as several Speckled Woods *Pararge aegeria* and Small Whites *Pieris rapae*.

There were a number of local people walking through the

orchard, some of them picking the communal fruit: hopefully enough would be left for the forthcoming Apple Day. We just had time to admire the Medlar trees when it began raining heavily and we had to rush for the cars.

Thank you Chris for leading the event. A full list of all the species recorded has been forwarded to Fauna.

Barbara Crooks

Photos are on page 24

Miscellany

A New Record For A Centipede

At the beginning of May 2013, John Holding sent me a copy of an email with an attached image of a centipede which he had sent to Tony Barber (National Recorder for Centipedes) for confirmation of its identification. John wrote:-

'Betty found the attached in a bath inside a house in Heysham (SD416620) and measured 5-6 cms long. Being rather a lively creature, it was released in the garden after this image had been taken. In retrospect, this may not have been the best thing to do.

A colleague of mine in the North Lancashire Naturalists Group, Martin Sherlock, thinks it might be *Henia vesuviana*. He looked at the British Myriad and Isopod Group (BMIG) web page to find only 4 widely scattered records, and therefore possibly under recorded. I can't say that I have seen this type of centipede before, but that maybe because in the wild you may not notice immediately that it has legs - took me a bit by surprise when I looked at it through a lens.'

Tony Barber replied confirming that Martin had correctly identified the species. He wrote:-

'The colour, greyish-greenish with the prominent dorsal vessel and the light last legs makes it one of our most easily recognised species.' Tony went on to say that the BMIG website/NBN maps are very out of date for centipedes as they are

just preparing a new atlas. Betty and John now have the most northerly record for this species and Tony added that he is not aware of many, if any, indoor records before.

The previous 4 northern records had been found in Chester, Belfast, Birmingham and Dublin, whilst southern ones were located on the Severn Estuary, London and the South coast.

Since then, John and Betty have found a further 7 of these centipedes: 5 were found in the bottom of John and Betty's bath and a sixth was seen 'walking' out of the bathroom. It has to be explained that the bathroom is a wet room on the ground floor and the centipedes could have climbed up one of several drains: Tony had mentioned that they are a 'robust species' that can withstand immersion in water for short periods. The seventh one was found in a cleaning cloth on top of the bath - John wonders how it found its way there as he thinks that it would not have been able to climb up the sides of the bath, having tried to encourage one of them to do so. All 8 centipedes have been carefully released in John and Betty's garden, where they will be looking out for them next year. Their usual habitat is dead leaf litter and at rest they curl up into a tight ball: this behaviour was noted whilst they were in specimen tubes.

Barbara Crooks and John Holding.

A photo is on page 24

The Horntail or Wood Wasp *Urocerus gigas* (L.) in Borwick.

In early August, I received a phone call from a friend in the village asking me if I could identify a large yellow and black insect with a long tail that was flying round a recently stacked log pile in his garden. He later showed me a photo taken on his mobile phone that confirmed my immediate thought that it must be a Horntail or Wood Wasp, a completely harmless insect despite its alarmingly long and powerful looking 'tail,' an ovipositor which it uses to drill into conifer trunks and branches to lay its eggs. The logs in this case were recently felled Spruce with a strong scent which no doubt attracted the insect. Obviously, only females have an ovipositor and are more frequently seen whilst searching for suitable egg-laying sites than the males which tend to fly around the tops

of conifers. Both sexes are more active on bright sunny days.

Once the eggs have hatched, they take up to three years to mature before exiting the wood through the bark via a characteristic round exit hole. Whilst developing within the timber, the larvae may be subject to attack from Britain's largest Ichneumon Fly *Rhyssa persuasoria*. This fly also has an amazingly long and thin ovipositor that it also uses to drill through the wood and place an egg on the unsuspecting Horntail larva. *Rhyssa* is incredibly adapted for this parasitic lifestyle, with extremely sensitive antennae and legs to detect its prey inside the timber, and with its needle-like ovipositor, no thicker than a human hair.

The Horntail is a forest insect and its national distribution (NBN Gateway) clearly shows a northern and western pattern within Britain, with clusters of records in more wooded are-

as. With the considerable movement of timber throughout the country, odd specimens could turn up almost anywhere, even from within timber used in construction and after the building is complete! Over the years, I have come across the insect on several occasions in our area and southern Cumbria, very often when concerned householders have discov-

ered them inside their properties.

There is a northern race that has a black ovipositor and is found in Scotland that may be worth looking out for in our area.

Jim Thomas

Bumblebees in Borwick

During the last few summers there have been several reports in the media that British bumblebees are in trouble, blaming the fall in numbers on a variety of causes from unsuitable weather to the careless use of insecticides by gardeners and farmers. For whatever reason, this does not seem to have been the case in the North West of England during 2013. I came across two early nests in a compost heap in the garden whilst throughout August there was a constant stream of bees working various plants. Although most flowers were visited, they seemed to be especially attracted to a white *Escaallonia* and, somewhat surprisingly, the large round flower heads of vegetable leeks. These were a dozen or so plants that we had not used during the previous winter and which I had left to go to seed out of interest. They produced typical *Allium* flower heads up to about 10cm in diameter, white and pale purple in colour. Throughout most of August, as many as twenty bumblebees could be seen on any single flower head and wasps were frequent visitors towards the end of the month. Whatever the textbooks say about choos-

ing suitable plants to attract bumblebees, my experience suggests that leeks should be added! It is so easy simply to leave a few of the plants, perhaps in a corner of the vegetable plot, to go to seed and watch just which species of insect do visit them.

Another interesting observation concerned the Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* (L.), a species first observed in England, in Landford in Wiltshire, in 2001 and since then extending its range northwards. It was first seen in North Lancashire in 2010 and recorded in Carlisle in 2011 (Franklin, 2011). I picked up a dead example on Borwick Hall car park on 24th July 2013 and subsequently saw one on flowers nearby. It is a very distinctive species with a bright ginger thorax, black abdomen and a white tail.

Reference.

Franklin, N. 2011. The bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* (L.) new to Cumbria. *The Carlisle Naturalist*. Vol.19. No. 2.

Jim Thomas

The Wood - A volunteer's perspective

This wood is known to me: I have come here on many winter days. As I enter, I listen for the call of a Jay cutting through the cold, still air to announce my arrival; small birds dart for cover but, after a few minutes, peace returns. Some Long-tailed Tits work restlessly through the thin, bare branches, their constant calls louder then fainter as they pass. Prints of Roe Deer coming this way before me pepper the ground, the double slots sharp-edged in the stiff clay. Wherever I pause, a Robin appears, assessing me with his bright, knowing eye. I am a poor substitute for the wild boars which would have rooted in the woodland floor in ancient times, or the pigs which foraged here later. Nevertheless, he keeps me company for a while until hunger moves him on.

Mossy stumps reveal where a long-dead woodsman worked. Tall, many-stemmed trees remind me of a former age when coppicing was part of farming and a wood was a valuable asset; a time when butterflies followed the woodman's axe. Then it ceased; the stools grew unchecked, the canopy closed and the rides became overgrown. Now, coppicing has begun again using chainsaws, but a brief interruption of noise and fumes soon passes and the wood re-imposes its natural pattern of small sounds.

I have made a secret bargain with this wood. It will sacrifice some of its trees and shrubs and I will give it back its butter-

flies. The trees it loses will heat many homes with their firewood. Piles of sectioned trunks sit awaiting collection. I know these trunks: - the weight of Hawthorn, the lighter burden of Ash, the heavy, dense whiteness of Holly. With some of the brash, I will create new habitat for small mammals, birds and insects. Some will be used to shelter the newly created, sunny glades. I know this brash too, each has its role in the dead hedge - the angular, brittle Ash, the pliant Silver Birch and Hazel which slide in so easily, the prickly Holly and the dreaded Blackthorn which fights back (but I value it nonetheless because it binds and strengthens the hedge).

The rest of the brash is burnt. The fires are a great attraction to the cows which come on site now and then to help to control the low growth and they delicately nibble the nutritious Ash buds on the waiting brash-pile. They are quite quiet and friendly and I enjoy their company. Elsewhere, lush green circles of Funaria moss reveal where the burning was done in previous winters. In a few years no trace of the fire will remain, but the smell of woodsmoke and the taste of baked potatoes will be strong in memory.

Dead wood does not go on the bonfire. I prize it for its fungi - the Candle-snuff and King Alfred's Cakes, the Hypoxylons and Diatrypes, and sometimes the blue-green staining of Green Elfcup.

Large Oaks stand untouched throughout the wood, their huge crowns laid bare in every detail against the winter sky. The knobbly twigs still carry the eggs of the Purple Hair-streak, with their tiny caterpillars waiting for spring. The lowest branches, which are already dead and ready to drop, harbour insect larvae of many kinds. Soon the exotic looking Longhorn beetles will begin to emerge. Eventually the bough will fall but I know that it will lie there for many years to come, full of invisible life. The woodland floor is littered with this precious, rotting wood, mostly still recognisable but sometimes just a soft, pale bundle of fibres loosely bound in a fragile papery skin.

Yews are also common in the wood. I look to one for shelter when it rains and am thankful, but it makes a sombre companion with its poisonous, dark green leaves, bark and seeds. On drier days, the birds feed on the soft pink flesh of the fruit. Yews are outsiders, slow growing and long lived, emerging from what looks like solid rock and surviving on next to nothing. Even fungi and lichens shun them. They keep themselves to themselves.

Soon the season of cutting and burning will end. Already the spring flowers are pushing through the leaf litter and in a few places the crinkly leaves of *Primula* are just showing through the turf. Walking down to the gate, I reach grassier, open stretches. A couple of these areas are dominated by the nests of Yellow Meadow Ants. Sometimes I have taken the liberty of sitting on one to eat my lunch - something I'd never do in the summer. After a snowfall, they look like giant Christmas puddings with their white caps of snow lingering for days after the meadow has completely thawed.

This wood is generous, not big enough to get lost in, yet big enough to reveal its treasures slowly. Its rides are open and its glades sunny. Its flora and wildlife are varied and some of its species are spectacular and rare.

You could get to know this wood too. It is open to the public at all times and its name is Myers Allotment.

Anne Smith

A photo is on page 31

Grow Your Own Remedy!

When I was a boy living in Parbold and walking each day to primary school in Newburgh, about half way along the journey we had to walk up a hill known as Ash Brow which, not surprisingly, had several old Ash trees in the hedgerow. One morning, we were looking at some strange, black growths on one of the trees and an old farmer who happened to see us told us that if we slipped one of the black growths into our pocket we would never have any problems with back ache! To prove his point he fished in his coat pocket and showed us a dried up one that he claimed to always carry with him. He lived well into his nineties and, though bent double, he carried several buckets of water everyday from a stream at one side of the road to his horse's stable on the other - so perhaps his remedy worked for him!

It was some time later that I realised that the black lumps were in fact the fruiting bodies of a fungus commonly known as Cramp Balls because of a widely held belief in their ability to prevent backache. Their scientific name is *Daldinia concentrica* and if you pull one of the hard fruiting bodies off its host tree you will see why – the underside has several concentric rings where it is attached, rings that are even more clearly seen if you cut a section through it. The fungus is also known as King Alfred's Cakes because of a perceived likeness to very burnt buns!

Initially they are reddish brown in colour and rather tough and leathery. The surface is often covered in brown spores that rub off to reveal the shiny dark surface: with age, they become black and very brittle. The fungus is widespread and common, and virtually exclusively found on Ash, though I have seen it on other deciduous trees. Over 100 species of invertebrate have been recorded from it, including worms, woodlice and beetles.

All this was brought to mind during the strong winds over the Christmas period when a fairly large, dead branch blew off the ash tree at the bottom of the garden. When I went to collect the fallen branch I saw that there were several Cramp Balls securely attached to it. I now have a couple in a box to see if any invertebrates emerge in due course!

P.S. At the time, both Ash Brow and the nearby Parbold Hill were not covered in tarmac on the left hand side as you climbed the slope, but still had a cobbled surface, apparently to give horses a better grip as they dragged carts up the hills.

Jim Thomas

Picture with this article is on page 31

Learning about a new area - and introducing myself

My name is Steve Garland and some of you may have already met me at one of the winter meetings or on the Roeburndale outing in April 2013. I have been a member of the LWT for a long time and I am currently a Trustee and Chair of the Conservation Committee; also a Vice Chair, as of this year.

In December 2011, after living in Bolton, Greater Manchester for 25 years, we moved to Bolton le Sands, Lancaster. Since then I have been getting to know a completely different area and its wildlife. I am a general naturalist, but with a special interest in insects. I run a moth trap in the garden and try to get out with a portable one too. The other invertebrates that I specialise in are bits and pieces from different groups:

- Wasps and ants (but not very good at bees yet)
- Dragonflies
- Woodlice, millipedes and centipedes
- Dead wood beetles and flies
- Ground beetles
- Leaf beetles (Chrysomelidae)
- Hoverflies
- Snail-killing flies (Sciomyzidae)
- Soldierflies, horseflies etc (Larger Brachycera)
- Lacewing flies (Neuroptera)

I know that some of these already have local experts, but I would be happy to help with identification of any other groups if required. I'm sure there is still a lot to discover in the area and look forward to getting more involved this year.

My wife Belinda and I are also interested in bats and have found the Lancaster Canal near our house is excellent. We have had Daubenton's, Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Whiskered, Brown Long-eared, Noctule and the area's first ever Serotine. We've also had lots of Natterers Bats on the Rivers Lune and Kent (in Cumbria). The habitat in the Lune valley looks excellent for Leisler's Bat which we used to see regularly in the northern Peak District and at Dunham Massey Park south of Manchester, so we hope to get out looking for them this year.

I am slowly getting to know more about the area and having to cope with lots of plant species that I never saw around Bolton, especially limestone and saltmarsh species. Hopefully these will have lots of new insects feeding on them too!

Cranwell Avenue

Burrow Beck rises near the old Moor Hospital and flows down to the Lune Estuary via some of the suburbs of south Lancaster. Most of the way, its banks are not built up, making a sort of green ribbon through suburbia. At one spot, the ground it flows through is very wet; it has avoided the attentions of the Council mowers and, indeed, Nature has been left to take its course for an unknown span of time. About twenty years ago, this place was declared a public amenity and money was found to lay paths and build bridges. Since then, it has again been completely neglected until a local schoolboy, Oscar Thynne, took it upon himself to do something. He formed a group with like-minded neighbours in July 2013, dubbing the site Cranwell Avenue Green Park (Cranwell Avenue being the nearest road). They plan to manage the site as a nature reserve.

The first event of the new group was a Plant Walk on 13 July 2013 which I went on with the redoubtable Dave Earl of Lancashire County Council. We found over 200 species of plant, including those in the adjacent grassland. This total was inflated slightly by Dave's ability to name Bramble species *Rubus fruticosus* agg - he found eight of these. The plant list was very much a

mixed bag. There were plenty of the usual finds on urban wasteland - Thistles *Cirsium*, Willow-herb *Epilobium*, Nettles *Urtica dioica* and so on. Unsurprisingly, there were a great many garden escapes (or possibly planted in some cases). Many of these were woody like Norway Maple *Acer platanoides*, Butterfly-bush *Buddleja davidii*, at least three Cotoneasters, *Forsythia x intermedia* and Portuguese Laurel *Prunus lusitanica*. But there were also gratifying numbers of "proper" wetland plants such as Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*, Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*, Amphibious Bistort *Persicaria amphibian* and Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*.

Members of other groups have been recorded here including three amphibian species and (to me more surprising) the likes of Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, but not, I think, in any systematic way. I am sure the site would repay the attentions of one or two entomologists.

The group holds regular work parties. If you would like to join them, please email Oscar Thynne, cranwellavenue@gmail.com.

Martin Sherlock



Horntail or Wood Wasp

J Tombs

A Longhorn Beetle

During the Group's outing to Myers Allotment in July, Linda Renshaw unearthed a black and yellow longhorn beetle with an unusual elytra pattern from an old log pile. Not sure of what it was, I took a photograph to try and confirm its identity later. A trawl of the website www.coleoptera.org.uk that evening found a match which revealed it to be *Rutpela maculata* ab. *disconotata*. My photograph is reproduced below, together with an image of *Rutpela maculata* in the more familiar form.

Mike Bloomfield



View from Myers Allotment (The Wood)

M Elsworth



'Normal' *Rutpela maculata*

M Bloomfield



Daldinia (Grow your own remedies)

J Thomas



Rutpela maculata ab. *disconotata*

M Bloomfield

Fairfield Association, 'Fauna' and 'Flora'

Over the last two years, the NLNG have run several bioblitz sessions at this new nature reserve located in central Lancaster (see article on page#), so I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce the organisation which runs the reserve and to outline their development plans.

The Fairfield Association is a local environmental charity with a remit to extend and improve green space in Lancaster (www.fairfieldassociation.org). It started life in 1996 when it was created to help protect a local, green play area near Lancaster railway station. This developed into looking after an area of 'waste' land as a millennium project and planting it as an orchard. The City Council leased the 2.2 acres to the Fairfield Association for a peppercorn rent and the local community promptly set about clearing, planting and maintaining the area as an orchard, the produce of which can be picked by anyone. Fundraising events are held by the local community and all management is done by volunteers.

During 2010-11 the farmland adjacent to the orchard became available for rent and "Fauna" was borne. The 16 acres are leased from the City Council, also at a peppercorn rent, and run as a nature reserve. The acreage had been pasture land for many years but had not been heavily fertilised. White Park cattle, a rare breed, were being grazed and this practice is being continued under the management regime for the nature reserve. The meadow habitats are being managed as open wetland with helpful input from the RSPB and the LWT, and from Natural England under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement. Walkways have been created around or across the area for the local human community to use, leaving most of the area for other creatures and organisms. The area has been made wetter by blocking drainage channels and creating 9 ponds from scrapes. It is hoped that this management will encourage the relevant wetland flora for bird species such as snipe, water rail, lapwing, curlew and other migrating species. One field is being managed as a traditional hay meadow, using the fodder as a high quality

supplementary food for the White Park cattle, as required. The fertility of the soil is being reduced by removal of the crop, limited exposure of the cattle and seeding from existing wildflower meadows (the seed was supplied through LWT connections from Heysham NR and Silverdale).

During this year (2013) the Fairfield Association has been able to extend the nature reserve through the purchase of land to the south, with the help of generous donations from the local community and a grant from the heritage Lottery Fund. This further acquisition of 34 acres, named 'Flora' for fundraising purposes, is currently a mixture of sheep-grazed fields (previously subject to substantial chemical input), hedges and a small area of previously heavily grazed, mature woodland. The management plan, supported by a substantial extension to the existing Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England, is to try to reduce the fertility of the land by some initial deep ploughing, followed by sowing with wildflower seed mixes so that there is a seed supply for birds and small mammals. The area has 'lynchets' which indicate a mediaeval ploughing regime. These will be maintained with the steeper slopes being left as 'beetle banks' so that the existing litter layers of the soil can be developed for maximum biodiversity. On the lower land, further scrapes will be created to extend the wetland areas of 'Fauna'. In addition, the woodland will be protected from grazing and extended by planting with local varieties of native species and further hedgerows will be created.

Taken together, the total 52 acres should form a series of differing habitats based on wetland areas. A nature reserve, managed for biodiversity, will have been created and will be available both for educational use within the Lancaster area and the enjoyment of the local community. I hope that you will visit the website to find out more and plan your own visit.

Chris Workman



Flora, with Fauna beyond

H Hicks

Remembering Jennifer and Roy

In the early spring of 2013, members of the Naturalists Group were very saddened by the loss of two very popular and knowledgeable people: Dr. Jennifer Newton and Roy Copson. As I am writing this, it is almost a year since they died, but many of us continue to feel their loss and to remember them with great affection. It was too late to include obituaries in last year's newsletter but it is important, in this edition, to remember the contributions they both made to the Group and wildlife in general in the north Lancashire area.

Dr. Jennifer Newton MBE.

Jennifer's interest and involvement in the natural world began in childhood when she spent a lot of time with her father, the botanist Professor Roy Clapham http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Roy_Clapham. We met him when he lived for a short period in Arkholme and also when his wife had died, with Jennifer in Hornby. He helped us several times with flower id - meticulous as ever., exploring plants and animals in the countryside around Sheffield. She often recalled, with a chuckle, how her father had persuaded her to become the grasshopper recorder in one of the Sheffield districts at the age of eleven. She had told him she knew nothing about them and he had replied that she soon would! At Cambridge University, she graduated in botany and zoology and then did her post-graduate research in plant physiology at Oxford.

Soon after 1968, when she and David came to live in Lancashire, Jennifer began volunteering with the Trust and began her involvement with the North Lancashire Naturalists, which lasted some 40 years. In our local area, Jennifer took on the role of voluntary trust manager for both Warton Crag and Aughton Woods Nature Reserves. She organised the summer and winter programmes for the naturalists, led many field trips, organised conservation work parties and ran training courses for the Trust and other wildlife groups. Jennifer became a Trustee of the LWT and was an important member of their Conservation Committee. In 2007, she was awarded an MBE for 'Services to Nature Conservation' and was awarded the 2009 Conservation Achievement Award by her peers at the Trust's Volunteering Conference.

As Kim Wisdom has written in her article, Jennifer was a very modest, unassuming person, but with a special gift in relating to people. She never tired of sharing her knowledge and expertise with others, was always very patient and appeared indefatigable when searching for wildlife. Many of us have

memories of her finding and showing species, and helping us with the identification. Jennifer had a great deal of time to give to people and possessed a gentle sense of humour.

Roy Copson

Roy, together with his wife Denise, was also an active member of the NLNG for some 20 years, following their move to Lancaster from Northampton in 1991. John and Betty Holding were good friends with Roy and Denise and they recall first meeting him on an outing to Humphrey Head in 1993. Roy took on the role as Fern Recorder in 1994/5, taking over from John Leedal. He also became an active member of the Fern Society, gradually extending his knowledge and expertise in this field.

John remembers an outing which Roy led to North Walney Nature Reserve in 1996. "By now Roy was taking a strong interest in grasses (as well as ferns) and he and Jennifer lagged far behind the main group carefully examining some grass specimens. When they finally caught up, he was told off by a member of the party who said that the leader should be at the front!" John said that this remark was met with some amusement and that Jennifer, like Roy, also frequently led from the back! This rebuke did not put Roy off and he regularly led field trips and also contributed articles and reports to the annual newsletters.

Roy and Denise continued to be enthusiastic, active and well informed participants on outings. John also states, "Roy had a very good eye for the detail in wildlife - he was extremely thorough in his analysis and could point out salient features of different species of ferns, grasses and flowers." Roy often expressed his wonder about nature and spoke and wrote about his thoughts in a very eloquent way. He was a very popular member of our group and a great joy to be with on our outings. Like Jennifer, he had a special way of communicating with people and inspiring them to look more closely at all natural life. He never lost his own wonder at nature, even during the more difficult times of his long illness.

Both Jennifer and Roy were exceptional people and they are very much missed by the Naturalists in our area. I hope that we can continue to organise and carry on the activities of the Group as they would have wished.

Barbara Crooks and John Holding