

HARROGATE & DISTRICT NATURALISTS SOCIETY



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2023



Please help keep HDNS running - volunteers needed

from the President

We have had a fantastic series of indoor meetings this Winter and plenty of interesting field trips arranged for the year, which I do hope you will find enjoyable. This programme of activities is planned and organised by your Council members, who also ensure that the Society runs smoothly and efficiently.

Council includes the President, Vice-President (vacant), General Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Programme Secretary and six members. At the moment we are short of four members and some current members are reaching the end of their tenure. We urgently require members to step forward to join Council - without you we will find it difficult to continue running the Society.

You do not need any special expertise or knowledge to be a Council member, just the enthusiasm to make the Society a success. Council meetings are held in an evening every one or two months by Zoom, so no travelling is required. Any of the Council members will be very happy to share with you what is involved.

Now is the time to decide to join Council as we will be electing our Council for the year at our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 26th April. Just let our General Secretary, Sue Coldwell, know of your interest (contact details on your membership card).

We also rely on our team of Recorders, who ably collate and report on species present in our recording area each year. Sadly, Mike Barnham and Jim Jobe have now retired from their roles as Recorders of Butterflies and of Coleoptera and other arthropods respectively. We are looking for members who have an interest in these groups (and of fungi, for which we have lacked a recorder for some years) to take on part or all of the role. We can provide advice and support to help you take on this interesting work.

You will be aware that we manage Farnham Gravel Pits for its wildlife: June Atkinson, who currently manages the site, is always short of members on her management team and anyone willing to lend a hand is encouraged to join her team.

A small but much appreciated role is helping with the refreshments at the end of each meeting. We try to operate a rota of members so this should not be onerous, except this Winter we had so few offers of help that a rota was not possible. Please do step forward for this during our next indoor season.

As you can see, there are plenty of ways you can support the Society and I urge you to step forward to help keep HDNS running.

Nick Gaunt

HDNS President

PROVISIONAL FIELD TRIP PROGRAMME Summer 2023

Location	Meeting Details	Target	Leader	Date	Book with:
Fairburn Ings	See Website	Wetland birds	Mike	Tue 9th May	Mike
Upper Teesdale	Meet at the Langdon Beck Hotel, Forest-in-Teesdale, DL12 0XP (NGR NY 853312) no later than 9:30 please to then travel up Teesdale. Bring packed lunch.	Black Grouse & Waders	Colin Slator	Wed 17th May	Muff
Middleton Woods	Swimming-pool car park, Ilkley. SE 118484, 10:30. All day.	Bluebells, spring woodland plants	Bruce Brown	Wed 24th May	Kerry
Stainburn	Start 9:00pm – see website	Nightjars	Mike Smithson	Tues 6 th June	Mike
Wensleydale	10:30 at Ballowfield LNR, small car park on R, 1km W of Carperby on the road to Askrigg. SE 994892. All day	Rare Spring plants	Kevin Walker	Fri 9th June	Muff
Ribblesdale	10:30 at Selside, B6479. Coming from Settle, park along track on left SE784757. All day.	Limestone specialities	Kevin Walker	Fri 16th June	Muff
Farnham – Meadows day	No need to book – drop-in from 10:00. Gate will be open. First track on L on Knaresborough-Farnham road, NGR SE354596	Specially aimed at new members or members who have never visited	Informal	Sat 1 st July, am only	
Smardale, Cumbria	10:30 at Reserve car park, 4 miles W of Kirkby Stephen NY 742083. All day.	Orchids and many rarities – see Cumbria Wildlife Trust info.	Us	Thur 6th July	Muff
Visit to the aquatic nursery, Nosterfield	Meet at 2:00 at the quarry visitor centre near Nosterfield, SE 283804	Wetland plants being grown to reconstruct lost plant communities	Project ecologist	Fri 14 th July	Muff
RSPB Old Moor	See website	Wetland birds	Mike Smithson	Wed 9th Aug	Mike
YWT Kiplingcotes Quarry or Strensall Common	TBA		TBA	Late Aug TBA	Kerry
Fungus foray TBA				Sat 5 th Aug TBC	

All the Field Trip reports from last year are on the website now, including the most recent trip to Aubert Ings, Cattal : hdns.org.uk.

MOTHS – SPRING 2023

Since the Autumn Newsletter (and the extended article on the HDNS website) and all the 2022 moth records having been submitted to your Recorders, 15 new micros and one new macro species have been confirmed for the Society's area. In addition to those listed in the previous newsletter, two new additional micros have been confirmed: *Stigmella assimilella* mines were found on seedling Aspen at Nosterfield NR on 23rd September (also a new species for VC65), whilst *Batrachedra confusella*, living up to its name, has been identified in retrospect. Nationally, all records were thought to be *Batrachedra pinicolella*, until two distinct species were identified! Virtually all UK moths are now thought to be *B. confusella* and examining detailed slides from dissected moths from 2006 at Hutton Conyers, confirmed *confusella* (also reconfirmed from the same site in 2022). Therefore, *pinicolella* has been removed from the Society's list and replaced by *confusella*.

Looking at the "facts and figures" perspective, 17,288 records were received last year (a slight decrease from 19,521 records in 2021). However, the number of species was up, to 819 (434 micros and 385 macros) and thus becomes the new record year total, by one species, compared with the previous record of 818 species, only set in 2020! The total number of species recorded in the Society's area has therefore increased to 1230.

Last summer will certainly be remembered for an unprecedented influx of Striped Hawk-moths into the UK, which started in mid-May and continued into early September. The majority were recorded along the south coast, some fortunate moth trappers catching several, whereas those of us further north and inland, lived in vain hope of one of these spectacular moths! Another notable influx of the very attractive Crimson Speckled, from October into November again proved hugely exciting for those living much further south. However, another spectacular autumn migrant, once almost of mythical status, the Clifton Nonpareil (more mundanely known as the Blue Underwing) was recorded at Bellflask on 19th September. Only the second record for the Society (the first was in 2007) and a first for VC65, this species appears to be recolonising some southern counties in the UK.

We would still encourage members to look for day-flying moths (see "Moth Challenge" under the *News* section on the Society's website). Simply record all day-flying moths when out and about (remember to take a camera or mobile phone with you). Orange Underwings fly around mature Birch trees on sunny days in March/early April – we look forward to your records!

Follow us on Twitter: [@JillWarwick](https://twitter.com/JillWarwick) or [@DoubleKidney](https://twitter.com/DoubleKidney)

Jill Warwick and Charlie Fletcher

FROM THROSTLE NEST FARM

About seventy years ago I remember a Corncrake calling day after day, in the top field which was a wheat crop. That was the last time I ever saw or heard one. This year we have a pair of Egyptian Geese nesting in one of the ponds for the first time. This brings the total of birds which have nested on the farm up to sixty five species. It has made me think of the birds we have lost and those we have gained. Last year we had Mandarin Duck (four broods) also three pairs of Buzzards, (all reared two young). Who would have dreamt of Buzzard nesting in our area a few years ago? I remember reading a book by John Mather where Buzzard were confined to the far west of Yorkshire where about nine or ten pairs nested. Mammals are the

same. I remember a Red Squirrel running along Ripley Park wall. Now every wood on the farm has Greys in it. Roe Deer are a common sight. I've never seen them in a herd before, usually a pair with a youngster or two! Rats are a common resident, we account for well over a thousand every year, but it doesn't make much difference. On the other hand both Stoats and Weasels are a rarity. I've seen just one in the last twelve months. The warm summer last year saw a Common Blue butterfly in the garden - a first! We have Holly Blues every year and we also saw a Humming Bird Hawk Moth for the first time.

Tony Stobbs

ASPIN POND AND MEADOW – MARCH 2023

The Friends of Aspin Pond continue to maintain the pond and our new meadow site on the Crag.

Last summer the pond dried out completely, as it has done in previous years, but the water level is now reasonably high. We are hoping our efforts to remove a great deal of the Branched Bur-reed will prove effective in reducing the amount of vegetation that was choking the pond.

Our first frogs of the year appeared on 17th March, at least two dozen, followed by a large amount of spawn. The Great Crested newts usually appear in the pond by mid April.

Although it is a relatively small site, Aspin Pond attracts quite a large variety of birds, due to the well established trees, shrubs and water. The results of the RSPB count were very encouraging this year-Blue tit, Great tit, Coal tit, Starling, Wood pigeon, Crow, Dunnock, Magpie, Goldfinch, Blackbird, Robin, Goldcrest. We are experimenting with bird feeders, but there is a constant battle with the squirrels.

On 17th January a diseased willow tree on the edge of the north side of the pond, had to be reduced considerably by Harrogate Borough Council (HBC). However, the remaining trunk will be an excellent habitat for wildlife. Also on the same day, the hedge was cut back by HBC, with the help of our working party and the branches were chipped by HBC. We are grateful to our volunteers who regularly help at our working parties. New volunteers are always very welcome. Please contact Sue Kitching on 01423 546684 if you are interested in volunteering.

A Rowan tree has been purchased by the Friends of Aspin Pond in memory of three of our founder Committee members, who have sadly died in the last two years. HBC will help plant the tree and the group will ensure it is well watered. Last November, the group planted Fritillary bulbs, native Bluebells and Yellow Rattle seeds. Our successful fundraising efforts, particularly quiz nights, help fund many of our projects.

In early January, the group took part in the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) New Year Plant Hunt and recorded Sun Spurge and White Deadnettle. The Snowdrops and Aconites are always a welcome site in January at the pond. The Primroses, Sweet Violets and Coltsfoot are positive signs of Spring and soon the Cowslips will be visible.

The group held its AGM on Tuesday 25th April, 8pm at Knaresborough Cricket Club. There were the usual formal reports, as well as copies of our new Management plan, which has been recently finalised with the help of Shirelle Hawkins from HBC. This plan should form a basis for future activities at the pond and meadow area.

Sue Kitching Chair of Friends of Aspin Pond
KNARESBOROUGH FOREST PARK

Following the incredible success of Longlands Common, Renaissance Knaresborough is a group of residents aiming to secure over 60 acres of greenbelt adjacent to Mackintosh park; linking to Longlands Common and the Nidderdale Greenway.

Visit the website knaresboroughforestpark.org for more information.

FARNHAM NEWS

During January, 80 Pink-footed Geese flew over to the south-east, two Little Egrets were seen, five drake Mandarin Ducks were present on the North Lake and a returning flock of 45 Pink-footed Geese flew over to the north at the end of the month. February was literally a "wash-out", with the only bird of note being a Peregrine Falcon. The first half of March began with a Stonechat on 11th, two Chiffchaffs on 16th, and Sand Martins arrived two days later. During the latter half of the month, there were two Little Ringed Plovers, 21 Whooper Swans, a Swallow on 30th and two Avocets dropped in the next day.

The feeding station was visited by 16 species during the winter. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were attracted to a peanut butter type food, which a Treecreeper also found to its liking. Thirteen Reed Buntings were counted, four species of tit occurred, also Goldfinches and the occasional Siskin, but no Yellowhammers this year. The lack of hard frosts and snow cover probably reduced any cold weather movements. Four persistent Grey Squirrels, which are able to access the fenced-off ground feeders, visited too often and have thus prompted a review of the station layout for next season. This should also improve the situation created by the presence of nine Pheasants which cause considerable disturbance.

The volunteer Management Team undertook a work day on site each month from September 2022 to 2nd April 2023. Work undertaken included:

1. new cladding was put on the front of the hide using floor boarding,
2. willows were cut back below the hide,
3. *Crassula* was raked out from part of the pond and left on the bank,
4. the contractors strimmed the six areas fenced off against rabbits and geese,
5. the level of sand in the Sand Martin wall drops each year, 19 bags of sand were taken out and used to build up the level again. The sand medium has to be the correct medium, otherwise it could collapse while the birds were breeding,
6. a new hand rail was fitted to the bridge leading to the copse,
7. the hedge round the pond was cut,
8. the Pyramidal Orchid site, which is fenced around to protect the plants, was strimmed,
9. the Tern Platform was cleaned up and made ready,
10. ten old fence posts were replaced with new around the fenced-off
11. the top path on the East Side was badly damaged when contractors carried out work on behalf of NPG. The team's final job was a major effort to make the path safe again.

These are just a few examples of the work carried out by our team of volunteer members. Unfortunately, on five occasions, the team consisted of only four members; the make-up of the team on any day is always unknown. The old saying "Many hands make light work" springs to mind!

If this continues, the status of Farnham G.P. as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation is under threat. All of you who visit Nature Reserves must realize that they have to be managed by teams of professionals along with volunteers like us. Farnham is not different, it's on your doorstep and it NEEDS YOUR HELP!

June E. Atkinson
Honorary Warden, Chairman of the Management Committee

Little Bunting at the Feeding Station at Farnham

Grateful thanks go to Joan McClean for the continued sponsoring this year of the feeding station in memory of her late husband Jack, and for Paul Birtwhistle for maintaining the feeders.

There was great excitement when on 23rd April 2022 Paul found a Little Bunting feeding with the Reed Buntings underneath the feeders. Little Buntings breed across the taiga of the far north east of Europe and Asia and is a rare vagrant to Western Europe.

Obituary notices:

Michael Garnett died suddenly at home in October after a short stay in hospital. He joined HDNS in 1971 where he became a Council Member and then President from 1982 to 1985.

Dorothy Prakke-Sclater, was a regular visitor to Farnham GP, but lived her last 7 years in the care home where she died, leaving a bequest of £2000 to the Society.

We sadly also lost this year Ernest Kemp, who joined the Society in 1965, Malcolm Clark and Alan MacCormack.

Full obituaries will appear in the 2022 Annual Report

2023-4 Membership Subscription Renewal

Individual Membership £20 Joint/ Family £30

You can pay by Bank Transfer

Account Name; Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society

Yorkshire Bank plc Harrogate Branch

Sort Code 05-05-45 Account Number 33786400

Please reference the payment with your Surname.

OR

A standing order mandate is on the JOIN US page of our website hdns.org.uk.

OR

Please make cheques payable to **Harrogate and District Naturalists' Society**

and send to the Treasurer; Lynne Gilland, 6, Moorland View Harrogate HG2 7EZ

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Bird Report

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The new membership card will be sent out in due course.