

# THE LEEDS NATURALIST

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1

### Field Trip to Madbanks and Ledsham

#### Banks SSSI 25th July 2012

After several cancellations due to weather, the trip went off with reduced numbers. The two sites are fine examples of calcareous grasslands. At Madbanks access was difficult with a locked gate. There was no YWT signage. By contrast access was straightforward at Ledsham banks via a gate donated by a Japanese corporation. However the reserve sign had been removed. Entertainment here was provided by the President falling down a hidden hole made by badgers or an exceptionally large rabbit.

#### MADBANKS

had abundant **Rock roses** and knapweeds and plenty of **Twayblades** that were setting seed. **Common spotted orchids** were mainly over. A good patch of **Grass of Parnassus** was just coming into flower. **Clustered bell-flowers** were fully out. **Burnet rose** was abundant, to the point indeed where it may need some control. About a dozen **Marbled whites** were seen together with **Six-spot burnets** and several **Brown plume moths**. Hoverflies included *Scaeva pyrastris*, *Sericomyia silentis* and 4 *Eristalis* species including *arbustorum*. 2nd to final instars of

**Meadow grasshopper** were abundant but only one instar of **Field grasshopper** was found. Apart from a drowsy **Blackcap** singing in the adjacent wood there were no birds.

#### LEDSSHAM BANKS

The lower parts of the reserve are not calcareous and, overall, flowers were not so noticeable. The only orchid was a battered **Pyramidal orchid**. The reserve does however have a fine clump of **Dyer's greenweed** and very large numbers of **Centaury**, neither of which were found at Madbanks. The enclosure for the **Pasque flower** was regrettably empty.

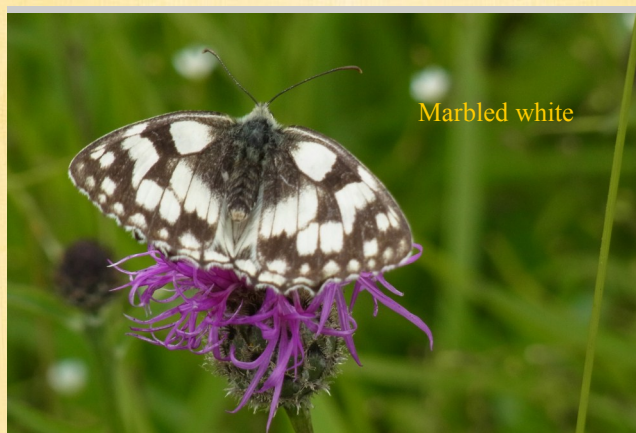
This reserve also had **Marbled whites** but additionally good numbers of **Small skippers**. One or two battered **Ringlets** were seen together with a brief glimpse of the first **Gatekeeper**. **Meadow browns** were plentiful at both sites.

The trip ended with an extended late pub lunch in Ledsham where a battered **Red Kite** (missing several primaries) inspected the party

Grass of Parnassus



Marbled white





## Joint Leeds Naturalists/ YNU Field Meeting at Fairburn Ings 25th July 2012

*Phyl Abbott writes:*

Due to the inclement weather we experienced during the early part of the year the flowering plants were less well developed than one would normally expect in mid May.

However 137 species were recorded including a splendid **Borage** (*Borago officinalis*) at the top of the riverbank, **Spindle** (*Euonymus europeus*) and two minute plants of **Common fiddleneck** (*Amsinckia micrantha*) which in fact is quite uncommon

A plant which was puzzling at the time was revisited two weeks later and identified as **Bur chervil** (*Anthriscus caucalis*). This umbelliferous plant has its stronghold in East Anglia and occurs in only a few other parts of the country. It is not a particularly eye-catching plant but it is interesting in that it is new to Leeds, new to West Yorkshire and new to VC 64.



Borage



Bur chervil



Bur chervil



## RECENT SIGHTINGS

- ⇒ A colony of **Speckled Bush-crickets** was discovered at Primrose Valley during the Wyke Beck Bioblitz at the beginning of June. There is only one other site in VC64. The insects are currently in their 2nd or 3rd larval instars.



- ⇒ The hoverfly *Leucozonina glauca* was found on the small stream at Bramhope Rugby Club on 18th July. There are some previous records but this specimen unlike previous sightings, was a male.



- ⇒ A **Dingy footman** was caught at Thwaite Mills on 20th July. This species has spread rapidly through Yorkshire in the last decade but is still a notably occurrence. It is believed to be the first record for Leeds.



## Wildlife and the Weather

- ◆ The appalling weather throughout June and the first half of July must, one would think, have had a devastating impact on wildlife. However at this stage it is difficult to catalogue this impact and we would welcome observations for the next issue of the Leeds Naturalist Newsletter
- ◆ One observable consequence has been the curtailment of moth trapping and drastically reduced catches. 49 macro moths were caught in Headingley Moth Trap in June against a normal catch of 200-400. But catches bounce back quickly when the weather improves making it difficult to gauge the damage. Planned public trapping events at Thwaite Mills yielded only 5 specimens of 4 macro species in early July but 97 specimens of 34 species on 20th July. **Poplar hawks** not seen during their main season, appeared battered but alive in the trap
- ◆ Insects have coping strategies, one of which is delayed emergence. **Small skippers** seem to have been delayed for about three weeks and **Small tortoiseshells** had a good spring, the best for several years but then disappeared until late July. However There have been no sightings yet of **Small heath** and **Small copper** which are probably more vulnerable species.
- ◆ The coping strategies of birds are often to have second broods. Chiffchaffs singing in urban Leeds until late June (it was a good spring for chiffchaffs) may indicate repeat breeding but we know nothing of the success.
- ◆





## Future meetings

*Meetings are held at the Quaker Meeting House, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2 beginning at 7.15 pm.*



**September 10th** Peter and Barbara Murphy *Natural wonders of Nepal*.  
Photographs of some of the birds, mammals, butterflies, scenery and culture of Nepal.

**October 8th** Gordon Haycock *Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Action Plan*.  
The Yorkshire Dales are home to a rich variety of scenery and wildlife, but are under pressure from tourism, climbers, walkers, agriculture and the local population. A plan is needed to reconcile competing agendas to ensure the survival of the unique wildlife and scenery.

Gordon is an ecologist and Chair of the National Park's Biodiversity Action Plan Forum.

**November 12th** Tom Dixon *The History of Liquorice*  
Tom is a retired farmer, with a considerable reputation as a speaker and broadcaster with his talks on liquorice - a plant once very common in the West riding but now almost extinct. This promises to be a hugely entertaining and possibly hilarious evening.

**December 10th** *Annual General meeting and Conversazione*.  
The AGM should last no more than about 30 minutes giving time for you to show natural history exhibits and photographs for identification or comment. This will be followed by refreshments. A digital projector should be available so bring your data stick or CD.





## The Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner

If you have recently noticed that the leaves of the horse chestnut are already turning brown, this is not, despite the recent appalling weather, the onset of an early autumn. It is the result of attack by caterpillars of the **Horse chestnut leaf miner**, a micro moth and a recent addition to our Lepidoptera. Peter Larnier wishes to gauge the extent of the problem which is certainly wide-spread among horse chestnuts trees in North Leeds. Please let him know of trees that have suffered from this moth—or indeed any that have escaped.



### Leeds Naturalists Club and Scientific Association

Annual membership fee £10.00

Applications to the Membership Secretary, Dr A Millard, Woodland Villas, 86, Bachelor Lane, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 5NF. Tel: 0113 258 2482

