

THE LEEDS NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 4

This issue contains the 2013 reports from our recorders

BOTANICAL REPORT FOR 2013

Phyl Abbott writes:

Spring was cold and wet so flowering was delayed, then in late April and May colour appeared as the early flowers all came into bloom.

The hybrid **Solomon's-seal** (*Polygonatum multiflorum x odoratum*) has escaped from gardens into two new sites. Alan Schofield found it in the Meanwood Valley and, a week later, I spotted it on the road verge on Adel Lane.

After being grazed, having had its cage knocked down presumably by cattle, the **Pasque Flower** (*Pulsatilla vulgaris*), at Ledsham, was down to the small remains of a plant last year but this year it made an amazing recovery and produced nine flowers.

A new invader from New Zealand has appeared in three Wharfedale gardens. The **New Zealand Bittercress** (*Cardamine corymbosa*) is a small white flowered plant with disproportionately long fruits.

A good population of **Heath Spotted Orchid** (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) has been found by John Hipkin in a

meadow at the top of Otley Chevin.

When the water level was low in the River Wharfe at East Keswick, Melanie Smith and David Taylor waded along and found two narrow-leaved aquatic plants which have yet to be accurately determined if flowers can be found.

During the Bradford Botany group's visit to The Hollies we discovered yet another site, the third in Leeds, for the **Alpine Buttonweed** (*Cotula alpina*), a plant native to south-east Australia, which was identified in Britain only three years ago.

David Broughton has been exploring the wetland areas north of the River Aire between Little Preston and Fairburn and has discovered several plants of interest.

At Allerton Bywater there was **Sweet Flag** (*Acorus calamus*), **Nodding Bur-marigold** (*Bidens cernua*) and **Buttonweed** (*Cotula coronopifolia*) was prolific. At St. Aidans he found **Golden Dock** (*Rumex maritimus*), and **Pink Water Speedwell** (*Veronica catenata*), and also **Pennyroyal** (*Mentha pulegium*) and **Brackish Water Crowfoot** (*Ranunculus baudotii*), both new to the Leeds area.



Northern Marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*)



New Zealand Bittercress (*Cardamine corymbosa*)

BUTTERFLY REPORT FOR 2013

Peter Larnar writes:

Peacocks

The butterfly of the year 2013 must be the Peacock which was seen in good numbers just about everywhere, producing lots of interest, even in people who don't normally take much notice of butterflies. After a run of poor summers, its abundance this year shows how quickly wildlife can recover when conditions improve.

I decided to see if my garden records – starting from 2006 when we moved to our present address.- would give some indication as to how special this year had been:

	Days	Number
2006	18	76
2007	8	8
2008	13	14
2009	8	8
2010	9	11
2011	5	5
2012	14	14
2013	24	50

Monthly totals over these eight years were July -38, Aug -124, Sept - 24, Oct -1

If I went back to the 1990s when there was a run of good summers, I think 2013 would be seen as a fairly normal year.

Late sightings

Mild days with prolonged sunny spells produced a number of November records which are unusual in these parts –[Small Tortoiseshells](#) being seen on the 7th and 9th, and [Red Admirals](#) on 4th 7th, 10th and 11th.

In contrast to the other [Vanessids](#), 2013 was a terrible year for [Painted ladies](#). I on September 2nd at Golden Acre is the only record to come my way.



The butterfly plant par excellence used to be [Buddleia davidii](#) the well-known butterfly bush, but in our garden it has been superseded by [Red Valerian](#). Like Buddleia this is not a native, but the butterflies don't care about that -they just lap-up the nectar. It begins to flower in June and, if you keep dead-heading, it will go on attracting insects until November; our last butterfly was on 7 November. And it's only growing from a crack between a path and a wall. What its doing to the foundations I can't ima...

CRASH!..



Humming-bird hawk-moth (*Macroglossum stelleratum*)

Hairstreaks

In Leeds we have three species of hairstreak butterflies – the [Green hairstreak](#) has one site on Otley Chevin; the others are difficult to see and are known from only a few sites, so it was good to learn from Melanie Smith about two new sites at East Keswick. The [Purple Hairstreak](#) was found abundantly on oak trees in Keswick marsh and the even less well-known [White-letter Hairstreak](#) was seen “on almost every elm” at Ox Close. Visits to these sites next year could be productive.

DIPTERA REPORT 2013

Hoverflies

This year saw an abundance of [Helophilus pendulus](#) which could be found from early May to the end of October. There were over 100 on my small garden pond in July. [H. trivittatus](#) was scarce; 1 was seen on August 18th at Golden Acre. A single specimen of [H. hybridus](#) among the [pendulus](#) on Headingley Hill on July 7th was the first record. Both [Eristalis pertinax](#) and [E. arbustorum](#) were common and had long seasons but [E. tenax](#) decidedly scarce. [E. nemorum](#) was not seen at all, [E. horticola](#) only once at Eccup Whin on 16th August and single specimens of [E. intricarius](#) found at Headingley Hill, Golden Acre and Eccup Whin.

The migrant and (?) resident [Scaeva pyrastris](#) was seen only once this year. Despite several searches of the wild garlic on Meanwood Ridge, [Portevinia maculate](#) was not found. The weather during its short season, however, was generally appalling.

By way of compensation there were several specimens of [Rhingia campestris](#) at Breary Marsh in May and large numbers of the amazing [Eristalinus sepulchralis](#) at the Rodley dragonfly pools in early July.

Numbers of migrant [Syrphids](#) were moderate at best this year, but they persisted. The final hoverfly of the season was [Episyrphus balteatus](#) on ivy on 14th November.



Green hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*)



Helophilus hybridus



Eristalis intricarius

*Rhingia campestris**Eristalinus sepulchralis*Other Diptera

- It was a good year for *Conopidae*. *Conops quadrafasciata* was seen at several sites with the last in the Temple Newsam walled garden in early September. Even better there was a nice specimen of *Physocephala rufipes* there as well.
- Black snipe flies *Chrysopilus cristatus* were abundant at Breary Marsh in late May.
- Several examples of the deceptive Soldier fly (it looks like a hoverfly) *Chloromyia formosa* were found

*Chloromyia formosa**Chrysopilus cristatus**Physocephala rufipes*

OTHER WILDLIFE NEWS

- ◆ The [Speckled Bush Crickets](#) found last year at Primrose Valley could not be found this year, even with the aid of a bat detector raising the possibility that the colony was wiped out by the prolonged winter and spring freeze-out.
- ◆ A vacancy exists for a new *Orthoptera* recorder following the sacking of the present incumbent for gross incompetence. He managed to record **NO** *Orthoptera* this year. The fact that he could no longer hear stridulation was no doubt a contributory factor. Applicants must be able to hear grasshoppers in the field. Training can be provided and a CD of songs can be loaned to the successful applicant.
- ◆ Clearly [Rhododendron leaf-hoppers](#) are made of sterner stuff. They were visible on bushes by the Upper Lake at Temple Newsam until early November.
- ◆ 100+ [Pied wagtails](#) were seen on the centre of Woodhouse Moor at 7.30 am on 15th November. They had gone an hour later. This suggests that there is a roost somewhere on the Moor. Trees in the Bowling club garden are suspected.
- ◆ The regular City flocks of [Redwings](#) had not appeared by November 15th although there were odd parties in the rural areas. There appear to be plenty of berries for them when they come. The Rowan crop has been particularly heavy.
- ◆ An [Otter](#) has been seen at Rodley Nature Reserve
- ◆ Carnage on Headingley Hill! 2 days after a young female [Sparrowhawk](#) was watched plucking and eating a [Wood pigeon](#), a [Fox](#) was seen to catch and eat a [Grey squirrel](#)



Indoor Programme for 2014

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



13 January	Dave Johnston	A naturalist in New Zealand
10 February	Phyl Abbott	Wildlife in the Eastern Cape: Flora and fauna of Eastern south Africa
10 March	John Mather	Round the Horn: Cruising the Southern Oceans
14 April	Peter Larner	French Leave: Snapshots of the French Countryside
8 September		<i>To be arranged</i>
13 October	Peter & Barbara Murphy	Brazilian Odyssey
10 November	John Bowers	Butterflies of Lesbos
8 December		AGM & Conversazione

♦ The outdoor programme is still under construction and will be announced later.

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

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