

THE LEEDS NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 5

Field Trip to Ledsham Banks SSSI 9th

July 2014

Peter Larner writes:

Six members attended on a sunny and very warm day. The reserve was its usual attractive self, but there were some changes. This year there were no **Fragrant Orchids** and the **Dyer's Greenweed** appeared to have declined even further from its abundance of three years ago. Over 200 spikes of **Pyramidal Orchid** had been counted, but almost all of them were quite small – about 3 or 4 inches tall. **Yellow Wort** and **Centaury** were plentiful.



Centaury

The **Ringlet** was probably the most numerous butterfly, but there were lots of **Marbled Whites** and **Meadow Browns**. In all 15 species were recorded, the last a **Brimstone** that flew into the reserve just as we were leaving.

After a meeting at the **Chequers Inn** – to compare notes etc – a visit was made to **Madbanks** - the other half of this reserve. As expected, this area was locked, and its appearance, as seen from over the gate, was not inspiring. Not many wildflowers were visible and very few butterflies were seen – a startling contrast to Ledsham Dale.



Blackneck moth



Empis tessellata

Abundant at Ledsham Banks



Looking for the Pasque flower

Field Meeting at Fairburn Ings 16th July 2014

A fine breezy day but unfortunately only three members turned up. By agreement the one non-botanist peeled off from the other two to look for birds and insects.

Phyl Abbott writes:

Several species were added to the plant list for the site. These included **Chicory** (*Cichorium intybus*), which was quite abundant near the visitor centre, and **Pyramidal Orchid** (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) in one of the damp grassland areas. **Meadow Cranesbill** (*Geranium pratense*) was seen alongside the paths. **Strawberry Clover** (*Trifolium fragiferum*), discovered here only two years ago, had increased to half a dozen patches in the field near the top of the bank south of the river. **Viper's Bugloss** (*Echium vulgare*) was splendid in several areas.

On the edge of the car park, growing beside **Common Centaury** (*Centaureum erythraea*), was a patch of a dwarf form of this plant, only 1 – 3 inches tall, with brighter pink flowers – very pretty.

John Bowers writes:

The first thing to greet me on entering the Reserve was the song of a **Grasshopper warbler** at an unexpectedly late date. Snatches of songs of **Garden warbler** and **Blackcap** were to be expected, as were the full songs of **Whitethroats**.

Dragonflies were abundant and I recorded 10 species. Unexpected was a male *Aeshna juncea* which thought it was a brooch and insisted on perching on my chest. *A. grandis* and *A. cyanea* were expected. *Libellula quadrimaculata* was at the end of its season with a few battered males sitting round hoping for late females (sounds like my student days). Two male *Libellula depressa* were seen briefly. *Sympetrum sanguineum* were abundant and busy breeding. Among the damselflies, the season for *Coenagrion puella* was almost over but *Enallagma cyathigerum* and *Lestes sponsa* were active. A few *Ischnura elegans* completed the set. It was too windy for decent photographs.

There were several *Eristalis intricarius* but otherwise very few very common hoverflies and no Lepidoptera of note except for big numbers of both **Large** and **Small skippers** and a female **Brimstone**.



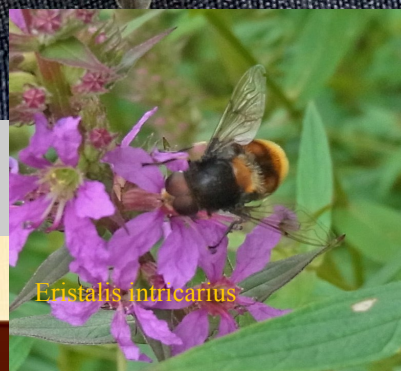
Viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)



Chrysops retusus

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Eristalis intricarius

RECENT SIGHTINGS



Humming-bird hawk moth

Peter Larner Took this photograph in his garden in Cookridge on 16th June.

Editor writes They are occasional visitors in Leeds. I have recorded them on Headingley Hill as follows: 1990-1; 1998-1; 2000-3; 2002-1; 2005-2; 2006-2; 2007-2. None since 2007.

Heather Walker writes:

I first saw this plant growing in a crack in the concrete near the kitchen door. It started quite small but by December 2013 it measured over 5 feet high and about 3 ½ feet wide. The branches coming from a hollow central stem started to get clumps of green-petalled flowers about as big as a little finger-nail.

I took a sample of the plant to the YNU AGM but nobody could identify it. I then sent a sample to the YNU Recorder for Alien Plants, Geoffrey Wilmore, who couldn't identify it either and who sent it on to Eric Clements in Hampshire. He identified it as **Rough Niger** (*Guizotia scabra*), a member of the dandelion family.

This appears to be the first record for the North of England and the third for England. The two previous English records are from Hampshire and Kent in 2010 and 2011. The plant was very probably imported with the bird seed I feed to my canary. Its origin is uncertain, probably tropical or sub-tropical from Ethiopia or Abyssinia!

Sadly during the gales in late December the plant was snapped from the bottom and was completely destroyed.



Pyrausta purpuralis

John Bowers found lots of this pretty day-flying moth on honeysuckle in his garden in early August. Peter Larner has seen them occasionally in Cookridge on mint.



Masonry Bees on Headingley Hill

The York stone walls of the houses on Headingley Hill are the home of the masonry bee *Osmia leaiana*



This little bee is parasitized
by the much smaller wasp
Monosapyga clavicornis



Tiny cracks in
the walls are
exploited by an
even smaller
little brassy sol-
itary bee
*Lasioglossum
morio*



Visit to East Keswick. 24 July 2014

Peter Larner writes:

Six members, 2 guests and members of the East Keswick Wildlife Trust were present on another very hot day. We visited Keswick Marsh – teeming with marshy plants and with good numbers of butterflies, dragonflies, hoverflies and other more obscure insects [What exactly are these? I don't recognise the term! Ed.]—and then moved on to a recently acquired meadow and a patch of woodland. These areas have yet to reach their potential, as management has been delayed for reasons that are largely outside the control of the EKWT.

The Trust is doing great work to conserve nature in the village, and we are grateful for their help in the arrangements for this visit and for guiding us around the reserves.



Dwarf form of Common Centaury



An obscure insect

The Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner Update

John Bowers writes:

This beast continues to flourish and it is hard to find a horse-chestnut leaf that it is not inhabiting. Even the tiny 2 or 3 year old saplings in the bottom of my garden have been infested. In mid-July I was catching dozens of the moth in my moth-trap but they are so small, 3.5 mm, that normally you wouldn't notice them



Horse-chestnut leaf miner *Cameraria ohridella*



This moth (*Ectodemia decentella*) is even smaller (2.5 mm) and its brilliant white pedicels look like eyes staring up at you through the gloom. It mines the keys of sycamores and is attracted to moth traps

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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6 spot Burnet moth