

THE LEEDS NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 11

The programme of field meetings for this summer has been badly disrupted by the generally atrocious weather.. The weather not only meant that little was seen on the trips that were made, but discouraged members from attending them. Since the lack of what most of us would think of as summer weather appears to be the new norm we probably need to re-think our programme. In fact ad hoc adjustments are already under way. Following experience in 2015, May trips were largely abandoned. 2016 led to further adjustments with curtailing June trips too. The only June trips this year were to St Aidans on 14th when only 2 members attended and the weather was windy but the rain held off until noon and 29th to Ox-close Wood, re-scheduled from 17th May and then cancelled on the day because of the appalling weather . All three July trips took place although the cold weather reduced insect numbers and probably attendance. At the time of writing the forecast for the August trip to Ledsham is dire. We probably have not yet reached the point where the programme needs to be inverted, with the indoor meetings in the summer and outdoor meetings reserved for the winter when the weather is likely to be better, but the matter will be kept under review.

St Aidan's RSPB Reserve 14th June

The bushes between the river and the canal again provided a range of summer warblers. Lesser whitethroat was in sporadic song as well as Garden Warbler and Blackcap, the latter clearly winding down. Chiffchaff was also heard and Willow Warbler seen. A single Sedge Warbler was on the river bank. The Marsh contained Reed Warblers. An Avocet was on the main lake and a pair of Shelduck as well as the usual wildfowl. Oystercatchers appeared to be breeding among or on the various tanks in the compound by the lower car park and a party of 8 were on the Marsh. Bittern was said to be present but we didn't see it.

A few Common Blues were in the bushes. Meadow browns were scattered among the marsh vegetation together with a few Ringlets. Large Skippers were plentiful.

Phyl Abbott writes: There was the usual diversity of plants and we added a few species to the list for the tetrad, including Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*), Field Forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*). It was surprising that Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) hadn't been noticed before.



Honeysuckle



Ox Close Wood 29th June

Heavy overnight rain and a very bad weather forecast led to a last minute cancellation of the trip. News of the cancellation didn't get to Gavin Boyd who was already on his way when the decision was taken. As it turned out the day was overcast, cool but dry and the following insects were recorded and a number of specimens taken away for identification and confirmation

Mecoptera

Panorpa germanica

Coleoptera

7-spot ladybird

Harlequin ladybird

Rhagonycha fulva

Micro-Lepidoptera

Nemophora degeerella

Pseudargyrotoza conwagana

Nettle-tap moth

Macro-moths

Riband Wave

Silver-ground Carpet

Clouded Border

Common White Wave

Large yellow underwing

Straw Dot

Butterflies

Meadow brown

Ringlet

Hoverflies

Baccha elongata

Chrysogaster solstitialis

Episyrphus balteatus

Helophilus pendulus

Leucozona glaucia

Melostoma melinum

M. scalare

Platycheirus albimanus

Myathropa florea

Volucella pellucens

Other Diptera

Xyphosia miliaria

Lyciella rorida

Coremacera marginata

Tetanocera arrogans

Sepsis cynipsea

S. punctum

Eudasyphera cyaniclor

Desciosoma caninum



Gledhow Valley Meadow 3rd July

Gledhow Valley Conservation group have acquired a meadow on the east side of Gledhow valley and invited us to list its insect fauna and advise on conservation. The meadow had clearly not been grazed for many years and comprised waist-high grasses and other plants. The meadow is bordered by woodland on the south and east sides with the road on the west and a hedgerow separating it from another ungrazed meadow, badly encroached by scrub, on the south. There is a very small wetland area, perhaps really a wet ditch but with running water, in the north-west corner of the site. 4 members accompanied Kay McDowell to the site (GB, JB, PL and AM). The conservation advice depended on three findings:

1. The discovery of the hoverfly *Chrysotoxum festivum*. The larva of this species feed on root-aphids farmed by various species of ants. This suggested that we might be looking at an ancient meadow that had possibly not been reseeded. The advice therefore was that the vegetation be scythed rather than machine cut and the fauna and flora of the resulting sward examined with a view to designing suitable grazing.

2. The presence of a good population of the striking local hoverfly *Platycheirus rosarum*. This is a species of wet meadows and ditch-



Platycheirus rosarum



Chrysotoxum festivum

es suggesting that the identified wet area and any others discovered once the vegetation is cut, should be conserved.

3. Some large plants of Lesser Burdock (*Arctium minus*) growing by the gate into the field, contains two species of Picture-winged flies: *Terrellia tusilaginis* and *Tephritis bardanae*. The distribution of the two flies is presumably dependent on the food plant. The opportunity to conserve this assemblage should definitely not be missed



Terrellia tusilaginis

Gledhow Valley Meadow (continued)

Complete species listColeoptera

Pteresticus modulus
Oedemera lurida
 Harlequin ladybird

Micro-lepidoptera

Calypha lacunana
Chrysoteuchia culmella

Butterflies

Small Skipper
 Large skipper
 Ringlet
 Meadow brown
 Peacock (larvae)
 Speckled Wood
 Large white

Macro moths

Common carpet
 Shaded Broad Bar
 Straw Dot

Hymenoptera

Bombus hypnorum
B. pasquorum
B. terrestris
B. lapidaries

Hoverflies

Chrysotoxum festivum
Episyrphus balteatus
Helophilus pendulus
Merodon equestris
Platycheirus albimanus
P. rosarum
Volucella pellucens
Sphaerophoria scripta
Sericomyia silentis
Syrphus ribesii

Other Diptera

Conops quadrafasciata
Chrysopilus cristatus
Dolichopus popularis
Poecilobothrus nubilatus
Sarcophaga carnaria
Sicus ferrugineus
Terrellia tusilaginus
Tephritus bardanae

Dipogon variegatus female



Tephritus bardanae



Phrass from Larvae of Peacock Butterfly

Ledston Luck LNR 6th July

6 members attended on a day with the usual strong wind and occasional sunny periods but for once, at least for the duration of the trip, no rain. The group went from the car-park to the pond but did not penetrate beyond it

Birds

Red kite, Buzzard and Lesser Black-backed Gull were seen flying over. Kestrel was hunting the higher parts of the reserve that were not visited. Yellowhammer was singing in the boundary hedge and Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Skylark were also heard. Reed Buntings were abundant around the pond. Swifts breed in the old mine buildings.

Butterflies

Ringlet, Meadow Brown, 1 male Gatekeeper—first of the season, 1 Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Small Heath, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, 1 Large skipper, Good numbers of Small Skippers.

Moths

Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet, Silver-ground Carpet.

Bumble-bees

Bombus pasquorum, *B. lucorum* agg., *B. terrestris*, *B. lapidarius*

DragonfliesAnisoptera

Large numbers of *Orthetrum quadramaculata* were actively breeding on the main pond. There were several male *Anax imperator* patrolling and at least one female egg-laying. One couple conveniently attended a photo-call. A few *Sympetrum striolatum* were emerging from the pond.



Narrow-bordered Five-spot burnet



Anax imperator coupling

Zygoptera

Active breeding among large numbers of *Enallagma cyathigerum*. Very few *Coenagrion puella* which were past their sell-by date. A few *Ischnura elegans* present in the reeds and small numbers of *Lestes sponsa*, these latter all apparently females.

Coleoptera

Andy Millard reports a Seven-spot Ladybird, a welcome change from the ubiquitous Harlequins

Ledston Luck (continued)Hoverflies

In a classic senior moment I managed to delete a number of photographs taken on the trip including those of the first specimen of *Chrysotoxum arcuatum*. Expensive recovery software failed to achieve its object and all that is left is this photo from which you can identify it if you know what it is to start with!

The other hoverfly photos were also destroyed but there was nothing else of moment:

Helophilus pendulus

Episyrphus balteatus

Cheilosia illustrata

Epistrophe grossulariae

Volucella pellucens—a commensal of social wasps which is abundant this year.

Other Diptera

Photographs taken for identification purposes were lost

Black snipe-fly was however common at the pond.

Flowers

Phyl Abbott writes:

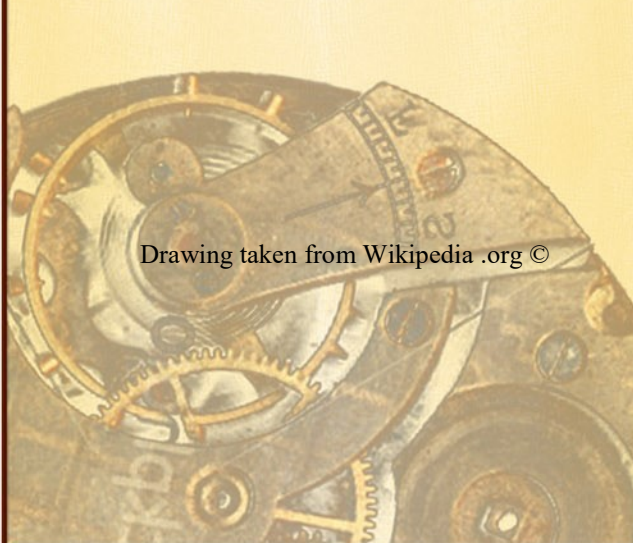
We were impressed by the number of orchids to be seen: Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*), Southern Marsh Orchid (*D. praetermissa*) and their hybrids. There was one Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*).

I was puzzled by a small plant in the pond but Graham identified as a Chara. This was confirmed when I learnt that Don Grant had taken a specimen to Albert Henderson who identified it as *Chara hispida* var. *hispida*.

Editor's Note Chara is a genus of charophyte green algae in the family *Characeae*.



Chrysotoxum arcuatum—recovered photograph



Drawing taken from Wikipedia .org ©



Lower Washburn Valley 13th July

5 members attended on a very disappointing day since from the moment of arrival dense damp cloud settled over the valley ensuring that very little was seen. The highlight of the day was a Tawny Owl perched on a road sign near Farley seen by Phyl Abbott on the journey. She writes:

We wandered along the narrow north-western edge of Lindley Wood Reservoir and saw ~~Marsh Woundwort~~ (*Stachys palustris*) and Hedge Woundwort (*S. sylvatica*). Bettony (*Betonica officinalis*) was new to the tetrad list. Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) was plentiful and Kay spotted the infrequent Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*).

Butterflies

Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Large White were all that were seen. In decent weather this is a very good site for a wide variety of insects.

Syllabus for Autumn 2017

Sept 11th	Mike Denton	Bird ringing in The Gambia
Oct 9th	Gavin Boyd	Introduction to Diptera
Nov 11th	Peter and Barbara Murphy	A year in the life of Rodley Nature Reserve
Dec 11th		AGM and conversazione
Jan 8th 2018		To be arranged

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

