



The Leeds Naturalist 2021

For the second year running, activities have been seriously impacted by Covid, amongst other things (see below). We haven't attempted to organise any indoor meetings, although some members have logged in to a selection of YNU Zoom sessions, both the themed ones and the more informal 'Chat' sessions on monthly Friday evenings. However, unlike 2020, we managed three field meetings, which are reported on below. Four were planned but the St. Aidans, RSPB Reserve visit, scheduled for May, had to be cancelled because of bad weather.

Very sadly, 2021 saw the loss of another of our long-serving and very loyal members. Phyl Abbott joined the Club in 1972 and remained a member for the rest of her life. Shortly after joining she was made President and after that became Secretary from 1978 to 1991. Phyl's enthusiasm and fascination for, and expertise in, wild flowers developed early in her life and remained throughout it. She was the recorder for Flowering Plants and Ferns, along with Dr Sledge when I joined the Club in 1989 (no doubt for several years before then) and then again from 2013 to 2019. Phyl contributed much to the YNU including Botanical Recorder for Mid-west Yorkshire (Vice-county 64) from 1996 to 2018 and President of the YNU 2006-7. Her magnum opus was the *Plant Atlas of Mid-west Yorkshire*, a project which Phyl initiated, spent many hours in the field collecting data for, and edited, resulting in a magnificent volume which is a fitting legacy for Phyl's contribution to botany. She will be sadly missed. A more extensive obituary is published in *The Naturalist*, August 2021 edition (Volume 146, No. 1107, pp156-158).

The Club continues to be financially secure but perilously low in active members. As will be seen from the AGM report below, we shall continue without evening face-to-face meetings but will have a programme of field meetings, in the hope that we can attract potential new members. I have been told by a member of a neighbouring naturalists' society that the best way to publicise meetings these days is by Facebook (despite the fact that's it's already considered 'an older person's social medium!'). So, if anyone would like to take on board a Leeds Nats' Facebook (and/or Twitter) account we'd be delighted to hear from you!

As per last year there will not be a syllabus card issued for 2022 as all relevant information is contained within this newsletter. Please consult the website (<https://leedsnats.com/>), watch out for emails or contact myself (0113 2582482) for updates on the programme.

Andy Millard

Field Meeting: Golden Acre Park & Adel Dam

Thursday 15th April

Six members met, (thereby being fully compliant with the Covid restrictions at the time – i.e. 'the rule of six': maximum of six individuals from different households meeting outdoors), in the main carpark on Otley Road on a cool but warming sunny morning. Within Golden Acre Park Bullfinches, Chiff-Chaffs and Blackcaps were singing well.

A good display of Fritillaries was in flower in the grassland immediately adjacent to the Mercure Leeds Parkway Hotel and, a bit further on, to the lakeside of the path, carpets of flowering Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrages were recorded.



Artist's Fungus (*Ganoderma applanatum*). Photo: A. Millard

Within Adel Dam YWT reserve a specimen of the Artist's Fungus (*Ganoderma applanatum*) was found on a log next to the path with galls of the Yellow Flat-footed Fly (*Agathomyia wankowiczii*) growing on the underside. This is one of the only insect and fungi gall combinations known in Britain.



Galls of the Yellow Flat-footed Fly (*Agathomyia wankowiczii*) on the underside of *Ganoderma applanatum*. Photo: A. Millard

From the hide overlooking the lake good views were had of Greylag and Canada Geese, a pair of Mandarin Ducks, Teal, the inevitable Mallards and a Little Egret on the island in the centre. At the southern end of the reserve Purple Toothwort *Lathraea clandestina*, planted at some time in the past, was in flower. A nuthatch was heard calling loudly in this area and we had a fleeting

glimpse of a Sparrowhawk landing in a ditch and immediately flying off.



Purple Toothwort at Adel Dam Reserve, 15 April. Photo: A.Millard.

Field Meeting: Rodley Nature Reserve

Wednesday 9th June

The weather was warm and sunny to start with but clouded over as the day progressed. Three members met in the car park with two others plus a friend meeting at the visitor centre, which, because of Covid, was not open for entering but was serving refreshments from the door. The enclosed hides were locked.



Water Soldier, *Stratiotes aloides*, Rodley Nature Reserve.

Though native in Eastern England, it will have been introduced here. It is a plant that is not always visible as it is normally on the bottom of the pond & only comes to the surface, as here, to flower. The flowers are dioecious and all British material is female only, so the photo shows a whorl of sterile yellow staminodes with the six bifid styles in the centre. Photo: Graham Heffernan

Common warblers (Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Whitethroat) were in good voice as we went round the reserve. The plant communities established with the dragonfly ponds produced a diverse and colourful display. Banded Demoiselle & Blue-tailed Damselflies were frequent. Amongst other insects only common bumblebees were recorded (Common Carder, Buff-tailed, Red-tailed and Tree). It was, however, pleasing to see good numbers of 7-spot ladybirds, as opposed to Harlequins and a Common Cardinal beetle was seen scrambling through a clump of Cleavers.



Red-headed Cardinal Beetle *Pyrochroa serraticornis*, Rodley Nature Reserve 9 June. Photo: A.Millard

Perhaps the highlight of the visit was an aerial display by the local raptor community. There was a Common Buzzard, three Red Kites and a very irate Kestrel which dive-bombed one of the Kites in a very spectacular fashion. Despite the enjoyment of watching this it was a little frustrating to hear a rumour that a Peregrine and a Hobby had been seen earlier in the day!



Mint Moth, *Pyrausta aurata*, on Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*. Rodley Nature Reserve, 9 June.

Reportedly seen fairly regularly on the Reserve. It has two generations: in May & June and again through July & August, flying during both day and night. The larvae feed on Mint & related species. Photo: Graham Heffernan.

Field Meeting: Ledsham Dale

Tuesday 6th July

On a fairly showery day, interspersed with brief, warm, sunny intervals, four members plus one guest paid one

of Leeds Naturalists' Club's regular visits to this Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve.

The recent warm, fairly wet weather had produced a good display of lush vegetation, many of the species to be expected in the Magnesian Limestone grassland. These included Black Bryony, Lady's Bedstraw, Crosswort, Eyebright, Tall Restharrow, Rockrose, Centaury, Lesser Hop Trefoil, Dyer's Greenweed, Wild Thyme, and a lot of Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids. Twayblade was also noted. The leaves of Pasque Flower (too late in the season for flowering), for which the reserve is famous, were observed, protected in a wire cage.

Birds were not that evident but it was pleasing to hear Song thrushes and Skylarks.

Butterflies were seen in good numbers, particularly Meadow Brown and Ringlet. Several Marbled White and both Small and Large Skipper were also observed.



Marbled White, *Melanargia galathea*, Ledsham Dale, 6 July. Photo: P. Lerner.

Amongst the Hymenoptera only common bumblebees were noted (Buff-tailed/White-tailed workers and Red-tailed) but a sawfly collected was later identified by Ian Andrews as a female *Tenthredo brevicornis*, only the 4th VC64 record post 2000.

Leeds Garden Observations 2021

Robert Collins – North Leeds

Most of my nature this year has been in my garden in North Leeds. The most important note is that there has been a shortage of butterflies. Apart from white butterflies I saw very few. The most notable absence was Peacock butterflies on my buddleias. Usually I have clouds of Peacocks attracted to the bushes but this year I only saw three or four. Also apart from one or two Small Tortoiseshells I normally have a flush of them on my *Origanum*. This year there was no flush. I also did not see any Red Admirals or any Painted Ladies.

I do not know if it was just my garden or whether the phenomenon was more widespread. Also insects generally seemed to be less common than usual.

My compost bin is in two halves and I empty one half each year. Normally I find 3 frogs settling down for the winter so I tip them into the other half. This year there

were none although I did see one in the garden. A curiosity is that there are no ponds nearby.

--o--

Peter Lerner – Tinshill.



Small Tortoiseshell, *Aglais urticae*, late June. Photo: P.Lerner.

This is the first time I have seen Small Tortoiseshells mating in our garden, and at this time of year. They normally mate after hibernation in March or April and there is not usually a summer generation



Elephant Hawkmoth, *Deilephila elpenor*, early July. Photo: P.Lerner.

There hasn't been much incentive to do moth-trapping this year but it was good to catch this one - posed by me for the photo. The Elephant in the name refers to the bulky caterpillar. Foodplant - Rose Bay Willow herb



Scaeva pyrastris. Mid-August. Photo: P.Lerner.

A common hoverfly in the garden - identified by the white not yellow stripes on the abdomen.

--o--

Andy Millard - Horsforth

The natural history year really started with an impressive number of frogs spawning in our pond (around 80) and sounding like a distant motor cycle rally.

There were no major changes in butterfly numbers and the usual species of bumblebee and mining/mason bees were recorded. However, two species of solitary wasp, new to the garden, *Stigmus solskyi* and *Passaloecus monilicornis* were noted. Interestingly, the former is near the northern limit of its range and the latter towards its southern limit. Both were found on our dead pear tree trunk, which we had left standing at about 2.3m height and which is making its way steadily through the various stages of decay.

The usual bird species were observed and, during the summer months, it was reassuring to have the regular squadron of around 6 to 8 Swifts screaming around the nearby houses. One encouraging thing has been an apparent slow recovery in Greenfinches in our area after a definite decline, probably due to the disease. Trichomonosis.

Some recent weather stats from north Leeds

Highest temperature in 2021: 109°F – 16 June 2021

Lowest recently: -5°F - 6 January 2022

Wettest in 2021: 0.48" - 29 July 2021

Snow on 3 days in 2021: 12 May; 27 Nov; 29 Nov

Peter Birdsall

Leeds Naturalists' Club 2021 AGM

This year's AGM on 6 December took place on Zoom. Nine members attended, an 80% increase on attendance from last year, the first time we had used Zoom, so a promising trend! The Secretary's report and Treasurers' accounts were accepted and Council members were kept, as far as possible, as per 2021 i.e.

President	Mary Larner
Vice-president	Peter Larner
Treasurer and membership secretary	Andy Millard
Organisation secretary	Peter Larner
Minutes secretary	Peter Larner
Programme secretary	Peter Larner
Newsletter Editor	Andy Millard
Webmaster	Genny Twigge

Likewise, there has been no change to the recorders:

Aculeate Hymenoptera	Dr A Millard	0113 258 2482
Birds	Mr P Larner	0113 261 2589
Botany (Higher plants, lichens & bryophytes)	Vacant	
Dragonflies & Lepidoptera	Mr P Larner	0113 261 2589
Fungi	Mrs M Larner	0113 261 2589
Vertebrates (other than birds)	Ms K Hockridge	0113 247 5558

The meeting agreed that in view of the continuing Covid situation and previous low attendance at face-to-face evening meetings these should not be planned for 2022 but members would be alerted to the various YNU Zoom meetings, which they could attend. It was also agreed that a programme of field meetings should be planned for 2022 with attempts to publicise these more widely in the hope that new members could be enticed to join! In connection with this there was some discussion about the possible need for public liability insurance.

In view of the current situation the Club will continue to waive its subscriptions for 2022.

List of Field Meetings for 2022

Wed 27 Apr	St. Aidans RSPB reserve. Meet at Visitors Centre at 10.30am., GR: SE399286. Take Selby Road A63. Approaching Garforth turn right at roundabout on to Wakefield Road A642 then, in Swillington, left on to Astley Lane (near Swillington Church)
Thu 12 May	Golden Acre Park/Adel Dam/Breary Marsh. Meet at Golden Acre car park, Bramhope at 10.30am. GR SE266417
Tue 7 Jun	Meanwood Valley. Meet at Visitor Centre, Green Road at 10.30am. GR SE281373. From Meanwood Road follow Green Road past Waitrose to the Park.
Wed 6 Jul	Rodley Nature Reserve. Meet at reserve car park at 10.30am, GR SE230362. Visit conditional on access being restored after work on the canal bridge

If you think that you are likely to join one or more field meetings please email Peter Larner (see address below) so that you can be notified of any changes to the schedule, which will also be posted on the website.

Peter Larner pandm.larner@gmail.com



Sexton beetle *Nicrophorus investigator* (spot the mites!). Photo C. Rew