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# The CARLISLE NATURALIST

Volume 1 Number 1

June 1993

*Published twice-yearly (spring/autumn) by Carlisle Natural History Society*

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*This is the first issue of a new venture by the Carlisle Natural History Society, appropriately starting in its Centenary Year. Future numbers will continue to include notes, articles and recent reports from the region, and will carry Society news and events.*

*Appropriate contributions, including line illustrations, are welcomed by the General Editor.*

*David Clarke - President C.N.H.S.*

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## **Reports on Field Meetings 1992**

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**31st May 1992:**

### ***Chalk Beck and Sowerby Wood***

Walking up the track to the quarry, one of the first things of note was the voracity of the local mosquito population. About two dozen Palmate Newts were noted in the small pool in the quarry along with numerous aquatic insects. Further on up the beck Meadow Saxifrage was found growing abundantly in a field and another small pond which was drying up was full of small frogs and tadpoles. Three species of orchid were noted; Early Purple, Common Spotted and Twayblade. Over lunch several species of butterfly and moth were recorded including Red Admiral, Orange-tip, Small Tortoiseshell, Wall and all three "Whites".

Birds seen in the area included Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Chiff-chaff, Redstart, Treecreeper, Spotted Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Tawny Owl, Greenfinch, Yellow-hammer, Bullfinch, Mistle Thrush, Mallard and Grey Wagtail.

The ponds in Sowerby Wood contained a number of dragonflies and damselflies, namely; Four-spot Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*), Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrhosoma nymphula*), Common Blue (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) and Blue-tailed (*Ishnura elegans*) Damselflies. The large new pond was also home to dozens of Palmate Newts.

*Barry Marrs*

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(On a further visit to the Sowerby Wood ponds on August 18th David Clarke and Stephen Hewitt identified 8 species of dragonfly, the additions being the Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*), Common Hawker (*A. juncea*), Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*), Black Darter (*S. danae*), Azure Damsel-fly (*Cænagrion puella*) and Emerald Damsel-fly (*Lestes sponsa*.)

**5th July 1992:**

**Clints Quarry and St. Bees**

A good sunny day gave an ideal opportunity to see both of these important West Cumbria reserves. Clints Quarry (an abandoned limestone working) was awash with flowers. A small number of spikes of the uncommon Bee Orchid were the star attraction, though there were nice groups of other commoner species, including Pyramidal Orchids. Butterflies included the Hedge Brown and Grayling both of which are mainly coastal in Cumbria.

*St Bees Head proved to be the site of a very exciting discovery by Roy Atkins on 29th July 1992, when he found the first Speckled Bush-cricket (Leptophyes punctatissima) ever seen in Cumbria.*

St Bees Head saw yet more butterfly activity, with occasional Painted Ladies and Dark Green Fritillaries. A single Clouded Yellow was caught and photographed (this irregular migrant was widespread in 1992). Large numbers of nesting auks were mainly Guillemots, though a few Puffins, Razorbills and Black Guillemots were also seen. Gannets and a Peregrine put in brief appearances.

David Clarke

**2nd August 1992:**

**Carrock Fell**

The planned visit to Claife Heights was abandoned because of weather prospects. A hastily-agreed alternative was provided for the morning only, with a visit to the Carrock Fell area, where flowering stems of the tiny and very scarce Bog Orchid were seen - perhaps 40 or 50 spikes in all. The Welton colony of Creeping Ladies' Tresses Orchid was also briefly visited. Although it continues here, the plants are increasingly being shaded out by scrub growth.

A final call at Sowerby Wood, Dalston, produced numbers of Red Admirals and a fine caterpillar of the Large Elephant Hawk Moth on Willow-herb.

David Clarke

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**6th February 1993:  
Galloway Wild Goose Chase**

This now annual event was as interesting as ever. One of the first stops was at Ruthwell where a large flock of finches was feeding in the fields. Most were Greenfinches, but several Bramblings, Reed Buntings, Linnets and Yellowhammers were also seen.

The first Barnacle Geese of the day were seen near Glencaple, while there were several Pintails on the sea and Pink-footed Geese flying over. Auchenreoch Loch, which held a Smew the previous year, had only Wigeon, Goldeneye and a Great-crested Grebe apart from the usual Mute Swans, Coot and Mallard. Dabchick was added to the list at Threave as well as two Buzzards.

At Loch Ken the Greenland White-fronted Geese were seen along with a flock of Greylag Geese and also Canada Geese on the water. The return journey was timed to coincide with the starlings coming into their massive roost in the plantation at Kinmount, however no starlings showed at all - only a solitary bat brought out of hibernation by the mild weather! Having given up on the starlings, the new roost was discovered as we drove past Gretna where a large flock of several

thousand birds could be seen swirling in the sky above the village.

*Stephen Hewitt*

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*This journal is the mouthpiece for all members of the Carlisle Natural History Society: make sure you use it to the full!*

*As well as coming to the meetings and outings advertised, you can also use it to reach other members - as well as the wider public - with your news, you can share your interests, call on the help of readers . . .*

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE of "The Carlisle Naturalist" is:**

**August 1st 1993.**

*Send your contributions to the General Editor, Stephen Hewitt, contact address - see page 5.*

### **Site Surveys**

In an effort to tap the skill and experience of Society members to provide useful information for nature conservation, we have started to organise field meetings to survey the wildlife of particular sites. This information will be stored on computer in Tullie House and made available to the Planning Department and conservation organisations, as well as being accessible to individuals (subject to any restrictions on sensitive and confidential information).

The first of these site surveys, to Kingmoor Sidings on June 10th 1992, was a great success with over 20 members attending. The plant list has already been produced and a copy of it given to Carlisle Countryside Group, who manage the site. The

insect and bird lists will be available in the near future.

Other site surveys are included in the programme for 1993.

### **Survey of the Wildlife Interest of Birdoswald**

The County Museums Officer, who manages Birdoswald, has requested the Society to undertake a survey of the wildlife interest of the site and has agreed to pay £100 towards travel expenses and the production of a report. A field meeting to the site has been organised for June 1993 and several members will be making visits throughout the year to study particular wildlife groups. Anyone who would like to volunteer help, please contact me.

*Stephen Hewitt.*

### **BOOK SALE**

*The Society still has some stocks of previous Transactions which are available to members at very reasonable prices, on a first-come-first-served basis. Because of the very competitive prices quoted, members will only be allowed one copy of each title. The titles available from Stephen at Tullie House are:-*

#### **LAKELAND ORNITHOLOGY**

1952, Ed. Ernest Blezard. £5.00

#### **LAKELAND MOLLUSCS**

1967, E. Blezard, M. Garnet and M. Milne £3.00

#### **LAKELAND BIRDLIFE 1920 - 1970**

1974, R H Brown. £3.00

Also:

#### **BIRDS IN CUMBRIA**

- back numbers of most years £1.00

## **Identification Workshops**

These will take place in Tullie House at 10am on the dates given below.

Two hours of study in the morning, using the museum's collections, will be followed by a field trip in the afternoon. The Workshops will be free to Society members.

**Members and Guests: Please book in advance, A.S.A.P.**

### **Grasshoppers and Hoverflies, Saturday 10th July 1993**

This will dovetail with the field trip to Birdoswald in the afternoon.  
Leader: Stephen Hewitt.

### **Dragonflies, Saturday 24th July 1993**

This will introduce a field meeting in the afternoon, venue still to be decided.

Leaders: David Clarke and Stephen Hewitt.

For details, contact Stephen Hewitt (contact address and phone number opposite).

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**Copy deadline for the next issue:  
1st August 1993 - see page 3.**

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## **Centenary Year 1993**

The Society is 100 years old this year, and to mark the occasion we are planning several events, two of which are listed below - PUT A NOTE IN YOUR DIARY NOW!

On **Saturday 25th September** we are organising a one-day seminar on the theme of "A Hundred Years of Change in Cumbria's Wildlife".

**Friday 26th November (evening)** - a Birthday Party to celebrate the inaugural meeting of the Society on November 30th 1893. This will be an evening meal to which all members and their partners are invited.

Further details in the next Newsletter.

### **Credits box**

#### **General Editor:**

Stephen Hewitt  
(**contact address:** Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery, Carlisle CA3 8TP.  
Tel: (0228) 34781)

#### **Word-processing:**

Stephen Hewitt  
and Geoff Naylor

#### **Layout and D.T.P.:**

Jeremy Roberts

## ***Skeletons in the Cupboard***

The museum has been computerised, which will be fantastic just as soon as we learn how to operate the machine and then find the time to put some information on to it! There are two key uses to which the computer will be put.

Firstly there are the collections to be documented. Once we have all the information about all the collections on computer we will be able to answer all the questions about what we have, collected by so-and-so, on such-and-such a date and from where. However, as there are somewhere between **150,000 and 200,000** specimens in the Natural History collections this could take some time, so don't hold your breath!

The other priority is to get information on the local wildlife and important sites on computer to create a database which can be used by the Planning Department and others.

With this second objective in mind, Geoff Naylor has spent the winter collating all the butterfly records for the county (some 8,000 so far) and is now engaged in entering them onto the computer. The aim is to map their distributions in the county, target the important species and monitor notable populations in the future. Please keep a record of any

butterflies you see this year to add to the database and improve its effectiveness.

Geoff has also collated all the amphibian records from last year's survey and we will shortly be producing the report (free to all those who contributed). Copies of the report on the reptile survey in 1991 are available from me (cost 80p to cover photocopying).

Work on sorting and restoring the collections in the new stores continues. Those members who toured the museum stores last February saw the new entomological cabinets into which the collections are being transferred, and work is also going ahead on the geology collections with the help of volunteers.

*Stephen Hewitt*

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### **WARNING:**

*Anyone wishing to do (voluntary) work on the collections, or putting information onto the computer, will be seized (and perhaps not released).*

# ***CLOUDED YELLOWS IN CUMBRIA IN 1992***

*Using information that has been received by the Society, the Museum, and via the Cumbria Naturalists' Union (Bill Kydd), Geoff Naylor has been working at Tullie House putting the records onto computer and mapping the distribution of butterflies in Cumbria. The following report on the Clouded Yellow is based on that work.*

1992 proved to be a major year for this species. In all, 163 records were received. These were from 41 of the 10km squares which represents roughly half the total area of the county. Mapping was undertaken on the basis of tetrads (2km squares), of which 110 were occupied.

Main concentrations occurred in three areas, perhaps reflecting density of observers to some degree at least. These areas were:

1. The South Solway lowlands between Carlisle and Kirkbride.
2. The coastal regions centred on Whitehaven and St. Bees
3. The southwestern coastal area from Millom to Grange over Sands.

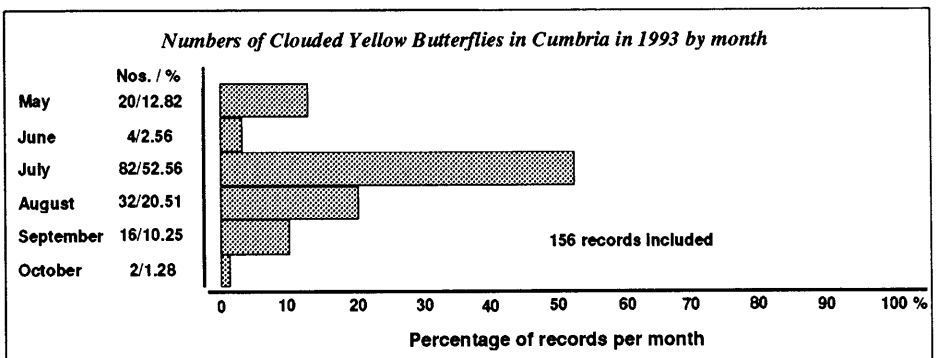
Clouded Yellow is indeed mainly a coastal species in Britain, but, in this case, quite a few were

seen east of Carlisle and along the Eden Valley at least as far south as Armathwaite and there were several in quite upland locations in the Central Lakes.

The first reported were on May 15th at both South Walney and Hodbarrow, and the next day there were three more sightings including one at Armathwaite. The last record was at Ulverston, as late as October 16th.

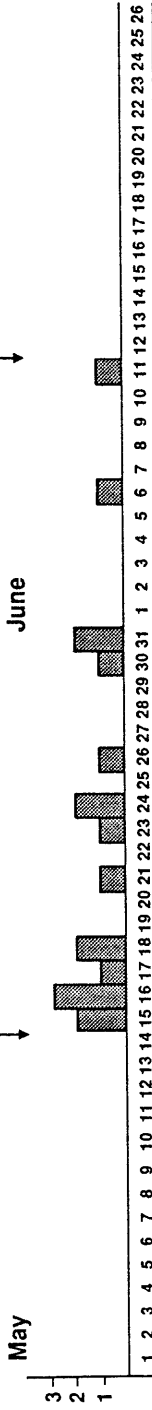
May 15th is earlier than any ever previously recorded but corresponds with the normal arrival dates (Heath and Emmet 1989). The previous latest was October 20th 1985, but there have been British records in November (Heath and Emmet).

Thus the visitation lasted 155 days with sightings on 59 of those days.

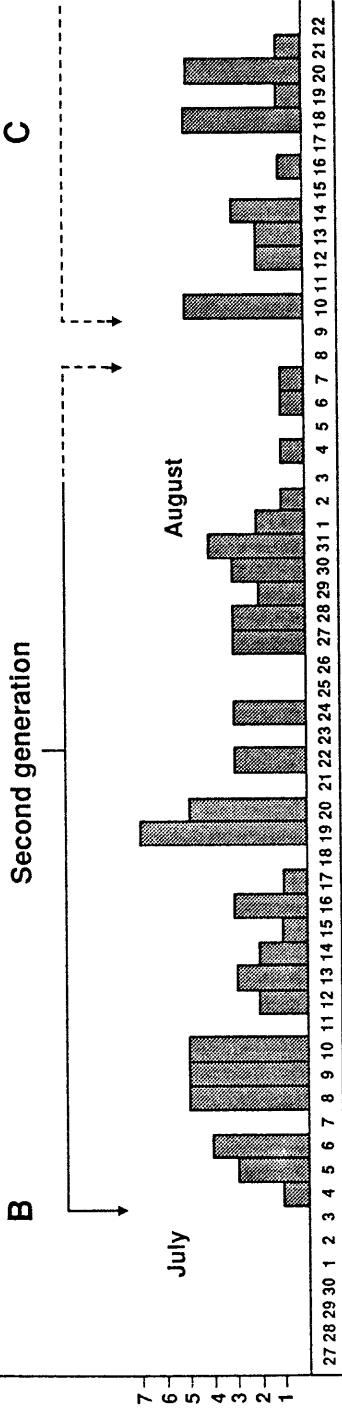


*Occurrences of Clouded Yellow Butterfly in Cumbria, May to October 1992*

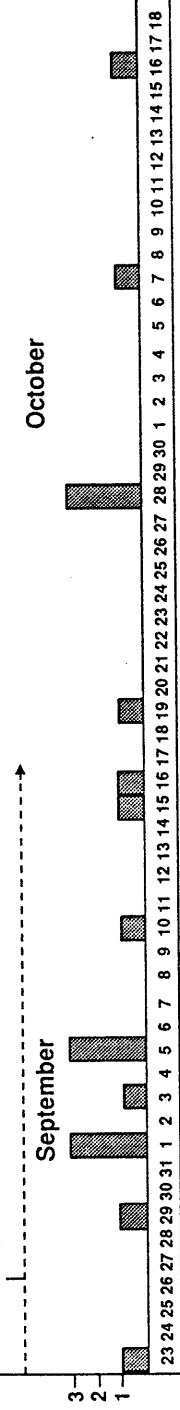
**A** First (immigrant) generation



**B** Second generation



**? Third generation**

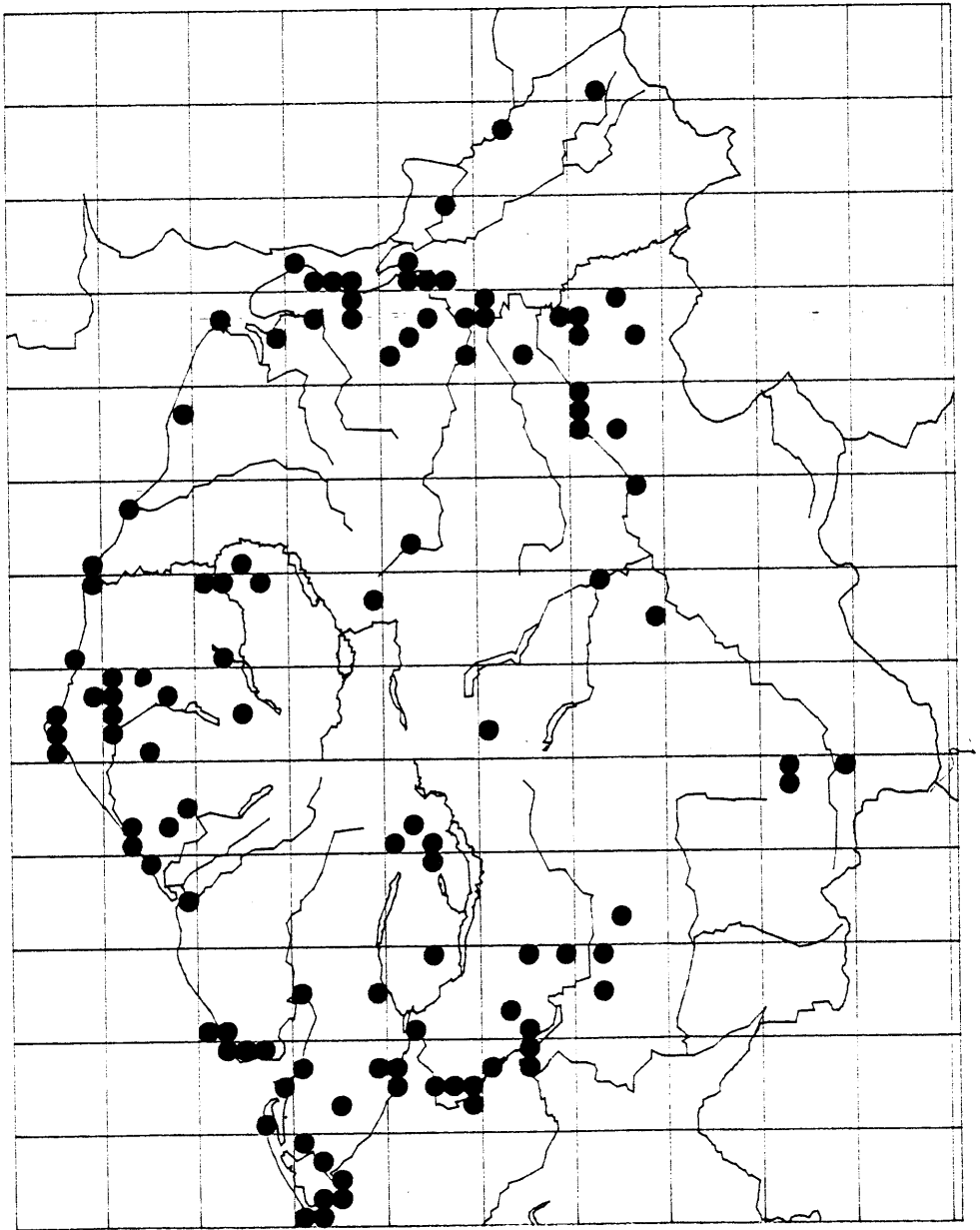


A - B = 50 days; B - C = 46 days

Numbers recorded per day



*Tetrads in which Clouded Yellow Butterflies were recorded in 1992*



*Clouded Yellows in Cumbria in 1992 (continued)*

From this it is clear that the initial invasion took place in the second half of May and into the early part of June. Then there were no records between June 12th and July 3rd, after which date those seen were presumably the progeny of the earlier ones. Heath and Emmet give the life cycle as: egg stage 6-10 days, larvae 20-40 days, pupae 18 days. The period between generations is therefore a minimum of 44 days (maximum 68). The first of the "young" were reported on July 4th (i.e. 50 days after the first arrivals). The Cumbrian-hatched individuals reached a peak in about the 3rd week of July (*ca* 65 days after first arrival). They remained in strength to about the 3rd week of August, then tailed off through September to October.

**Numbers**

Most records (67) were of singles with twos (26) and threes (14) the next most frequent. There were 13 records of groups from 4-7 in number. All reports in double figures are listed below.

July 8 - Ulverston area - 25

July 9 - St.Bees - 30

July 9 - Sellafield - "hundreds"

July 12 - Sellafield -35

July 22 - S.Walney - 11

July 28 - Moresby - 10

"July" - Eden Lacy - 14

no date - Sandscale Haws - 16

"August" - St. Bees - 16

Aug.20 - N. Walney - 22

Clearly peak numbers were between July 8th and 20th which is noticeable on the second histogram, but there appears to be another, lesser peak in mid-August (note that August 20th is the required 45-50 days after the second hatch on *ca* July 4th). Was there a third generation? This is certainly possible according to Heath and Emmet, and even a fourth has been known.

Overwintering, at any stage, has never been proved, but there are previous British records between February and April (?early migrants).

*Geoff Naylor*

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**Reference:** Emmet, A.M. & Heath, J. *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*, Volume 7, Part1 (Butterflies)

# ILLEGAL POISONING OF WILDLIFE

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Illegal poisoning threatens many kinds of wildlife including birds and mammals, insects such as honey bees, as well as companion animals like cats and dogs. Protected wildlife species are sometimes the intended victims of poisoned baits or the victims of baits aimed at killing crows, magpies or foxes which are often perceived as pests by farmers and gamekeepers. The laying of poisoned baits such as rabbit carcasses and injected eggs also threatens the lives of humans who enjoy the countryside; one gamekeeper has died as a result of this practice.

Birds of prey are among the most vulnerable species. During the period 1979 to 1990, 380 wild birds of prey were found poisoned. Carrion-eating Buzzards are particularly at risk and illegal poisoning is thought to limit the eastern spread of this species in the UK. Illegal poisoning has also affected the Red Kite, a globally threatened species, with 25 found poisoned between 1979 - 1990. Since then at least nine more have been found poisoned, with the most recent one being found in Bedfordshire in April this year.

In 1991, the Government launched a campaign, with the support of other concerned organisations, to raise awareness and encourage reporting of illegal poisoning incidents. A range of publicity material, targeted at the general public, as well as farmers and gamekeepers, has been produced and there is a free telephone hotline on which anyone can report a suspect incident.

Maximum publicity is sought from successful prosecutions in order to raise public awareness and to deter others. However, cases which make the courts represent the tip of the iceberg. Collection of sufficient evidence is difficult and dependent upon immediate reporting of any suspected incidents. It is therefore essential that anyone who discovers a suspected incident is aware of what to do and whom to call: everyone who regularly visits the countryside should keep a note of the freephone number handy (*eg* in a field notebook).

What should you do if you discover a suspected poisoning incident?

1. Note the location, number and species involved and any evidence of baits. Photographs would be useful but **DO NOT TOUCH ANY OF THE BAIT OR CARCASSES.**
2. If possible, cover the bait or carcass to make it safe.
3. Report the incident immediately on:

**Freephone 0800 321 600.**

(Remember though, that a dead animal by the roadside has probably not died as a result of poisoning and that you should not interfere with legal predator control operations *eg* using Larson traps).

*John Holmes,  
Vertebrate Ecology & Conservation  
Branch,  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
6th May 1993*

## **EILEEN RHONE 1920 - 1993**

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*Members of the Society will have been much saddened to learn of the tragic death of Eileen Rhone, as a result of a motoring accident at Carlisle on 30th March.*

*Eileen had been a long standing member of the Society and its Recorder since 1974. Her knowledge of the countryside, and especially local plant and bird-life, was extensive and will be greatly missed. Her botanical expertise enabled her to make a notable contribution to the Flora of Cumbria Project organised by Lancaster University.*

*She was also much involved in wildlife conservation matters and the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. She served for many years on the Trust's Reserves Committee, and also for some time on its Council. Her contributions went far beyond this, as she carried out hundreds of site surveys for the Trust and other organisations, such as the Carlisle Countryside Group, and between 1981 and 1992 she was an exemplary Manager of the Trust reserve at Drumburgh Moss. She also did valuable work for the then Nature Conservancy Council, latterly English Nature, as a Voluntary Warden over many years. Ironically, she was due to receive the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's prestigious Gilt Badge Award for outstanding voluntary service.*

*Born in North Wales, Eileen trained as a nurse at Liverpool and had come to the Carlisle area in the early 1950s. Latterly, until she retired in 1981, she was Resident Matron of the Scotby Children's Home. She had lived since then at Great Corby. Those who knew Eileen well will always remember most her friendly and helpful personality, which was the key to many of the achievements of her life. Our condolences go to her family in Wales.*

David Clarke