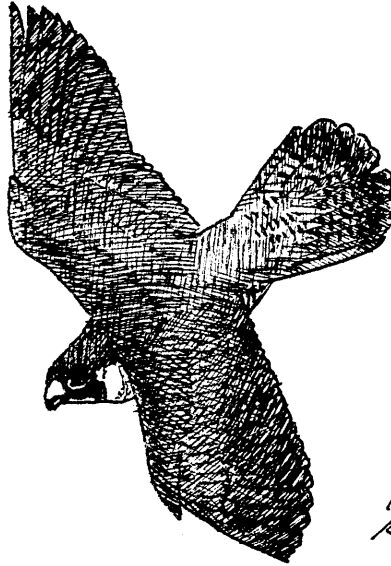


# The CARLISLE NATURALIST

Volume 2 Number 2

October 1994

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



Peregrine

(Roy Atkins)

## Contents

### *Reports on Field Meetings 1994*

<i>Fishgarth Woods</i> .....	2
<i>Sedges Workshop</i> .....	3
<i>Meikle Ross</i> .....	4
<i>Smardale/Waitby Greenriggs</i> .....	5
<i>Cumwhitton Moss</i> .....	6
<i>Engine Lonning</i> .....	7
<i>Grune Point</i> .....	8

### *Notes and Records*

<i>Selections from the Moth Trap</i> .....	9
<i>Pied Flycatchers in Carlisle</i> .....	10
<i>New Records of the Giant Lacewing (Osmylus fulvicephalus)</i> .....	12
<i>The Workington Ross's Gull</i> .....	12
<i>Greater Yellowlegs at Rockcliffe</i> .....	14
<i>Geoff Home honoured</i> .....	16

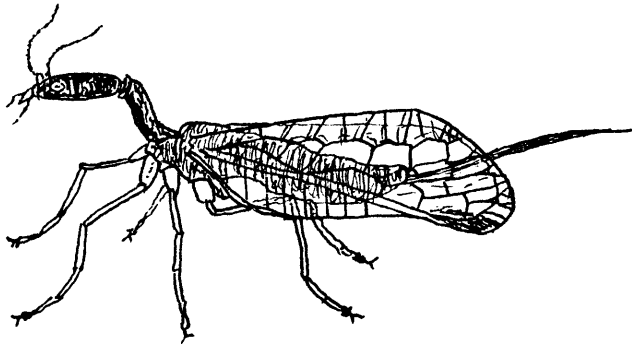
## Reports on Field Meetings 1994

---

21st May: Fishgarth Woods

Leader: David Clarke

A well attended meeting, with a good variety of wildlife. In the deciduous wood (a former sandstone quarry site) we found a wealth of spring flowers, including good numbers of Early Purple Orchid in one area. Amongst insects a snakefly (actually a neuropteran, *Xanthostigma xanthostigma*) was of special note. There are few records of these creatures of the upper canopy.



Snakefly

(Geoff Naylor)

Moving through the wood we checked the substantial Badger sett, which was obviously active. Along the river's edge we were pleased to see ample signs of Otter presence, though, as is usually the case during daytime, there were no sightings of Otters!

We added more interesting species as we progressed upstream along the riverside. These included lovely Meadow Saxifrage, the local sedges *Carex acuta* and *Scirpus sylvaticus*, and the local peat moss hoverfly *Sericomyia lappona*.

Many of the typical birds of this attractive area were present, including Wood Warbler, Buzzard, Grey Wagtail, Common Sandpiper, Dipper and Goosander.

The site clearly has much unexplored potential - for example we narrowly missed finding a colony of the Giant Lacewing, which I encountered near Fishgarth Cottage a couple of weeks later (see separate note).

David Clarke

(The snakefly mentioned above, spotted by Hazel Davison, is the first reported for Cumberland (vice-county 70) since those recorded in G.B.Routledge's paper on the neuroptera of Cumbria in the Transactions of this Society in 1933. Interestingly Jeremy Roberts noticed another specimen the following week at Wetheral Woods - Ed.)

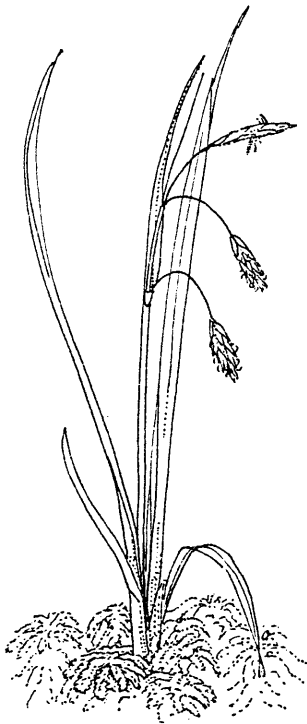
12th June: Sedges Workshop

Leader: Jeremy Roberts

17 people attended this workshop, ten of whom were already members of the Society, with others joining as a result of this highly successful day.

With an extremely well prepared delivery, Jeremy Roberts introduced us to the sedge family (*Cyperaceae*) and with vast amounts of material, discussed and demonstrated the sedge relatives and look-alikes from other families. The Education Room in Tullie House was littered with specimens ranging from 5cm to 2 metres in length! Later in the morning we looked at true sedges (*Carex* spp.) and with a key, expertly devised and produced by Jeremy to include only Cumbrian species, we were able to become familiar with some of the important features of this group and identify half a dozen or so species.

After lunch the party regrouped in the upper reaches of the Irthing Valley to put this knowledge into practice. First call was the National Nature Reserve at Gowk Bank where a stroll of two hours found an impressive list of sedges and other plants.



*Carex magellanica*

(Jeremy Roberts) hybridisation between *C. aquatilis* and other similar

Species seen included: Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Glaucous Sedge (*C. flacca*), Common Sedge (*C. nigra*), Flea Sedge (*C. pulicaris*), Lesser Pond Sedge (*C. acutiformis*), Bottle Sedge (*C. rostrata*), Brown Sedge (*C. disticha*), Tawny Sedge (*C. hostiana*) and Spring Sedge (*C. caryophyllea*). There was also the related spike rush (*Eleocharis quinqueflora*) and the sedge-like, but unrelated woodrush (*Luzula campestris*). Alert botanists also noted six species of orchid - namely Heath Spotted, Northern Marsh, Fragrant, Frog, Early Purple and Common Twayblade. Other interesting plants were Globe Flower, Butterwort, Marsh Valerian, Melancholy Thistle (non-flowering) and the rare eyebright *Euphrasia rostkoviana*.

The group then moved on to the end of the road at Churnsike Bridge. Here the River Irthing forms the boundary between Cumbria and Northumberland. The Water Sedge (*Carex aquatilis*), or something like it, grows here. Plants on the Northumbrian side differ slightly from Cumbrian ones, although neither are absolutely typical of the species. They are believed to be the result of hundreds, or thousands, of years of

species in the area. Those students not already confused certainly were now!

The highlight of the day was planned to be the rare Bog Sedge (*Carex magellanica*) and this was eventually found on the main part of Butterburn Flow. However, an equally exciting event was Roy Atkins' discovery of the Few-flowered Sedge (*C. pauciflora*) which, although known from the area, had not been seen here by our leader.

Two additional sedge-relatives were added to the list in the shape of Deer Grass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*) and Bulrush (*Scirpus lacustris*). Finally Pill Sedge (*C. pilulifera*) was seen with two other notable plants, Cranberry and Marsh Andromeda.

This was a really enjoyable day for beginners, amateurs and potential experts alike. The research and preparation by Jeremy was without parallel.

*Geoff Naylor*

---

**25th June: Meikle Ross**

**Leader: Brian Spencer**

The weather was kind to us for this trip as there was a respite from the very high winds which, two days previously had been bad enough to prevent observation through binoculars. The day was also pleasantly warm.

On the approach to the cliffs we saw Goldcrest, Whitethroat and many Rock Pipits in addition to the usuals. Out to sea were Gannet, Herring Gull, Kittiwake and Fulmars, the last three also nesting in large numbers. On the water below the cliff were a very few Black Guillemots and, on the cliffs, large numbers of Guillemots and Razorbills. Over on Little Ross the Cormorants seemed diminished in number since our last visit three years ago.

We were delighted to see a few Shags nesting in a situation which would have been missed had it not been for the gravity-defying ability of Geoff Horne to make observations three feet out from the cliff-face. In fact we were all able to see them. Geoff also took little time to locate the Peregrines with their young which were already accomplished flyers.

Richard Little, while climbing a gate, had propped his telescope and tripod against the fence. When he came to pick it up he found that it was an electric fence. Is this the first Electron Telescope?

This was an enjoyable day; Barry Marrs' bird count was over 40 species but we were not sure whether all had been at Meikle!

*Brian Spencer*

---

9th July: Smardale/Waitby Greenriggs

Leader: David Clarke

Fifteen people attended this meeting which began with a walk down the long-disused railway line from Smardale Hall to the cutting beyond the recently restored viaduct over Scandale Beck.

Most of the species for which this CWT Reserve is noted were seen. These included Common Wintergreen, Herb Paris, Bird's-foot Sedge, Fly, Fragrant and Greater Butterfly Orchids, Broad-leaved Helleborine, Stone Bramble and Marjoram. An unusual sedge was also found, probably Prickly Sedge (*Carex muricata* ssp *lamprocarpa*) but it showed some of the characters of other subspecies and species within that group. Despite a follow-up visit by Jeremy Roberts and myself it continued to defy certain identification. However, whatever it turns out to be, it will be a new record for 10km square NY70!

Butterflies were seen in some quantity, with Common Blue and Meadow Brown frequent and a few Large Skippers. Northern Brown Argus, a speciality of the Reserve, was seen in good numbers, but the highlight was a Dark Green Fritillary netted and released after being seen by the assembled group. Unfortunately the Scotch Argus, here at one of its only two English localities, was not yet on the wing.

Some interesting moths included Yellow Shell, Lesser Cream Wave and Gold Spangle. Other insects such as the distinctive Treehopper *Centratus cornutus*, the metallic green sawfly *Abia candens* and the bumble bee-mimicking hoverfly *Eristalis intricarius* were also seen.

After lunch the party travelled the short distance to Waitby Greenriggs Reserve, which is a continuation of the same disused railway with the junction of a branch line from Appleby. Butterflies were again much in evidence, Ringlelet and Common Blue being the most abundant. The habitat here was quite different with open calcareous embankments and a few scrubby willows. Typical of this habitat were Bird's-eye Primrose (almost all had finished flowering). Fragrant and Spotted Orchids with a number of hybrid Spotted Orchids were also noted.

Other species included Sawwort, both Salad and Great Burnet, and Bladder Champion. Burnet Rose and Sea Plantain added a maritime flavour which was enhanced by the vast colony of Marsh Helleborine for which the Reserve is primarily noted. The Helleborine was only just beginning to flower but close examination revealed many thousands of plants.

One corner of the Reserve produced an unusual assemblage of plants within a flushed area. These included Marsh Helleborine, Black Bog Rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Butterwort, Fragrant Orchid, Sundew, Flea Sedge and Long-stalked Yellow Sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*). After a long search a few old flowering spikes of Lesser

Butterfly Orchid were found.

This was a most interesting day in some of Cumbria's more unusual habitats. Some of the plants are particularly unusual, if not unique, in this area and the abundance of butterflies attested to the possibility of the 20 species attributed to the two Reserves.

Geoff Naylor

---

### 23rd July: Cumwhitton Moss

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

Ten intrepid explorers braved the heat, the flies (*not enough for my liking!* - Ed.), and other dangers on a baking July afternoon.

Cumwhitton Moss is an important site for a number of plants and insects but is difficult to access, and even more difficult to get out of! Of the ten starters only half returned with dry feet and at one stage there seemed a distinct possibility that only half would return.

Along the lane down to the moss, Prickly Sedge (*Carex muricata* ssp *lamprocarpa*) was pointed out and some interesting and colourful hoverflies were seen.

Eventually we stumbled into a large clearing and found Northern Bilberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*), a plant which normally grows at high altitudes but is found at Cumwhitton and a number of neighbouring mosses. Cranberry was seen nearby and Large Heath butterflies (another speciality of the site) were noted in moderate numbers. The pools created by the Nature Conservancy Council a few years ago were badly dried out after the long dry spell, and *Pyrrosoma nymphula* and a *Sympetrum* species were the only dragonflies seen.

Three or more Buzzards circled above and at one time were attacked by a Sparrowhawk. On the tops of the heather a number of gossamer tents proved to be the nurseries of the Wolf Spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*) each with its attendant formidable-looking female on guard.

We then plunged unwittingly into the wooded part of the site and were shown a small colony of the very inconspicuous Lesser Twayblade (*Listera cordata*). More showy however were some fine stands of Creeping Ladies Tresses (*Goodyera repens*) which looked splendid in the dappled sunlight. Deeper into the jungle we were finally led to a patch of the rare Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*), here at one of only three sites in Cumbria.

We had now seen most of the specialities of the area, but the nightmare was yet to begin. Making our way out proved difficult and for some reason, maybe due to fatigue brought about by the heat, rough walking and constant changes of direction,

several members started falling into pools and boggy patches, footwear was lost and frequent stops had to be made in order to take a roll-call. Eventually we emerged into the sunlight and thanked our leader for an unusual afternoon. We now know why David Clarke, the nominated leader, had taken a short holiday in Scotland.

Seriously, we did appreciate the time and effort put in during the previous week by Steve Hewitt, which enabled him to lead us to those special plants.

Geoff Naylor

(While attempting to work out the route of this fieldtrip on the morning of the meeting, I was very pleased to rediscover the plant bug *Orthotylus virens* which was discovered as new to Britain on Cumwhitton Moss by F.H.Day in July 1917. This species which feeds on Bay Willow (*Salix pentandra*) is still known only from Cumbria and Yorkshire and has not been seen on Cumwhitton Moss since F.H.Day's time. Unfortunately I was completely lost at the time and have no idea of the exact location! - Ed.)

---

### 6th August: Engine Lonning

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

Around a dozen members met for a relaxed walk around this area, recently declared a Nature Reserve by Carlisle City Council.

Although rather late in the year for many of the flowers (the orchids were well over), it was very good to see a strong colony of the decidedly local Flowering Rush, in full bloom along the river's edge.

Butterflies were well represented with Meadow Brown, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Wall, Small White, Green-veined White and Common Blue all being seen. Two species of grasshopper were also identified - the Common Green (*Omocestus viridulus*) and the Field Grasshopper (*Chorthippus brunneus*).

Of interest among the hoverflies were *Myothropa florea*, a bee mimic whose larvae live in tree rot holes, and *Dasysyrphus tricinctus*, a local wasp-mimicking fly. Noteworthy plant bugs included *Orthotylus concolor*, a rather scarce bug on Broom, and *Megacoleus pilosus*, a small yellow bug often found feeding on the flowering heads of Tansy.

Engine Lonning is a valuable wildlife site within the city and will certainly repay further study.

Stephen Hewitt

---

**10th September: Grune Point**

**Leader: Geoff Naylor**

10th September was a showery day with a strong SW wind. Fortunately the showers held back for the duration of the walk around the point.

A few plants of interest were seen early on, one of particular note being Isle of Man Cabbage which is found in a very limited west coast distribution from Lancashire to Ayrshire as well as the Isle of Man. Viper's Bugloss was also seen.

Few butterflies braved the strong wind, Small Copper, Common Blue and Painted Lady being the only species.

Several small grassland fungi were identified, along with the more spectacular Parasol Mushroom (almost a foot high and 8-10 inches in diameter).

A flock of several hundred waders on the shingle beach proved to be Oystercatchers, Bar-tailed Godwits and Sanderling in large numbers, with the addition of some Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Knot and a few Redshank. The only wildfowl seen were Mallard and two Red-breasted Mergansers. Despite the favourable wind, very few seabirds were in evidence, but, at some distance, a few observers saw a probable Manx Shearwater and a few Fulmars. The only passerine migrant was a Wheatear, possibly of the Greenland race.

A very relaxed, casual and friendly walk was enjoyed by all members.

*Geoff Naylor*

---

***Society Questionnaire***

Thank you to every one who has returned the questionnaire sent out with the last Newsletter. If you have not yet returned it, please do so as your views are important. Additional forms are available at indoor meetings or from me at the Museum. I will collate the returns over the winter and include a report on the results in the Spring 1995 Newsletter.

*Stephen Hewitt*

---

***The Social Event of 1995: CNHS Annual Dinner, 31st March 1995***

A room has been booked at Dalton Hall near Carlisle for the above date. The dinner will cost £14.00 per head. Anyone wishing to join in the fun should contact Stephen Hewitt for a booking form, or collect one at the indoor meetings.

The deadline for bookings is the **evening meeting on December 14th**.

---



## Notes and Records

---

### *Selections from the Moth Trap*

Several members of the Society operate moth traps and most of them probably know more about moths than I do. After reading this report perhaps one or two of them will submit something similar at a later date.

I have been trapping moths at light in my garden at Milton, Brampton for the past five years and recently gave a talk to the Society which demonstrated the construction and operation of my trap, along with a few slides of some of the more interesting moths. This report contains the best of 1994 to date and includes species new to the garden and/or scarce in the county. Perhaps it is also worth adding that for the whole of August and September the light source has been a “double life” 150 watt light bulb costing 85p at Asda. I bought this in a panic to replace the £20 bulb which blew out during a thunderstorm. The ordinary bulb has been so successful that I have not yet used the expensive replacement.

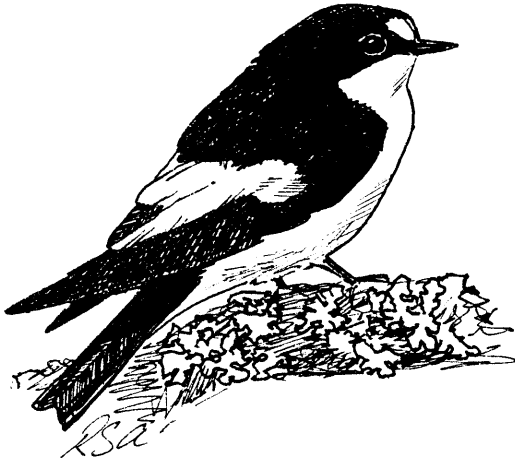
Notable moths captured:

Oak Beauty	- mid April	Marbled Beauty	- July
Shoulder Stripe	- April & May	The Olive	- July 16
The Satellite	- April 27	Shuttle-shaped Dart	- July 27
Red Sword Grass	- April 30	The Miller	- July 25
Emperor Moth (unusual for a garden)	- May 2	Dotted Border Wave	- July 26
		Gold Spot	- July 27
Lunar Marbled Brown	- May 2	Six-striped Rustic	- July 27
Water Carpet	- June 2	Slender Brindle	- early August
Common Wave	- June 14	Dun-bar	- August 17
Green Silver Lines	- June 20	Double Lobed	- August 19
Light Knott Grass	- June & July	Centre-barred Sallow	
Netted Pug (escaped)	- late June		- August & September
Sallow Kitten	- July 4	The Butterbur	- September 4
Straw Dot	- July	Striped Twin-spot Carpet	- September 5
Plain Wave	- July 8	September Thorn	- September 7
Minor Shoulder Knott	- July	Svensson's Copper Underwing	
			- September 15

(Those members present will remember the first Cumberland record of the last named species, when one was found in a bat box in Gelt Woods last autumn. Steve Hewitt found another in August this year, but this is the first to be trapped at light in the area.)

*Geoff Naylor*

*Pied Flycatchers in Carlisle*



In May Pied Flycatchers sang in our garden for over three weeks. This is a suburban area, separated from St. Ann's House and the wooded banks of the River Eden by an unclassified road. The riverbank has a fair number of mature trees, including Oak, Sycamore and Crack Willow. Our garden, about 30m long by 12m wide, has six 15-25 year old birch trees and a lot of dense cypress hedging. Of the four garden nestboxes, two were occupied by Blue and Great Tits, leaving an empty "Robin" box and another empty "Blue Tit" box five metres from our back door.

*Male Pied Flycatcher*

*(Roy Atkins)*

The Pied Flycatchers showed a lot of interest in this last box, in spite of a noisy dog and the frequent comings and goings of various people.

The daily events were recorded as follows, with most of the birds' visits being of 15 minutes duration or less:-

**May 6th.**

7 - 8am. Singing male outside back door. The bird was distinctly black-and-white and quite confiding.

**May 7th.**

1.45pm. Singing male in other garden trees. This bird was distinctly grey-and-white and less tame.

11.45am. Grey male singing in garden.

**May 8th.**

7am. Black male entering nestbox.

**May 10th.**

1pm. Black male singing and inspecting nestbox. Great Tit male reacted and sang against it.

**May 11th.**

8am. Male in and out of nestbox. Possible intermediate between black and grey males.

**May 13th.**

Pied Flycatcher only at St. Ann's.

**May 14th.**

7.30pm. Male singing in garden. All sightings now black-and-white males.

**May 15th.**

6.30pm. Male singing for two minutes in garden.

**May 16th - 21st.**

Male only heard at St. Ann's.

**May 22nd.**

7pm. Male singing five minutes.

**May 29th.**

3.30-5.15pm. Singing male eventually chased out of the nestbox by Great Tit.

This was the last record for the garden. No females were ever seen. It was the first record of a long-staying Pied Flycatcher in Carlisle to my knowledge and may indicate an expansion of range, but a pair raised a brood in nearby Rockcliffe recently. Jeremy Roberts has also reported the species at St. Ann's, as well as an even more straying Wood Warbler in song!

Meanwhile Pied Flycatchers are doing well in Cumbria this year; John Miles had a brood of seven in his garden and Mike Carrier has ringed well over 100 nestlings.

*Michael Tulloch*

---

***Any Volunteers?***

*I am considering launching an "Owl Pellet Survey" as a means of obtaining records of small mammals from across the county. If anyone is prepared to volunteer to dissect pellets sent in to the Museum so that the skulls and bones can be identified, please let me know.*

*Stephen Hewitt*

### *The Workington Ross's Gull*

I cannot help envying Fred Gould that moment his eyes fell upon this bird. My dash across to Workington on 28th June, two days after he found it, resulted in wonderful close-up views and I left a good hour or more later still grinning from ear to ear; I should think Fred must have been quite unbearable for days!

The bird, a first-summer complete with neck ring, is the county's first record. Over its five day stay it was seen by many observers, some travelling quite a distance to see it. One man I spoke to had come up from Leicester especially, as he was usually out of the country during the winter, the time when this species typically makes its rare appearances. I only wish the other "first for Cumbria", a Bridled Tern seen intermittently on Foulney Island from 2nd to the 5th June, had been as obliging.

Roy Atkins

---

### *New Records of the Giant Lacewing (Osmylus fulvicephalus) from the Eden Valley*

Steve Hewitt's record of this apparently scarce species from Uldale last year (*The Carlisle Naturalist*, Vol.2 No.1), prompted checking of likely sites in my regular "patch". Having got started at Fishgarth Cottage on 11th June, I quickly checked other stretches of the Eden nearby and was pleased to find the species at sites further downstream from Fishgarth, as well as upstream at Coombs Wood. I also found it almost on my doorstep along the Cairn Beck at Cairnbridge. My most productive search method was to wade along in the shallows, beating the waterside vegetation. All the positive sites had rank vegetation at the water's edge, and frequent overhanging trees.

Surprisingly, the four new 10km squares more than doubled recent Cumbria records for this fine and easily recognised insect. Possibly its fairly nocturnal habits and close restriction to streamsides make its presence less than obvious even at good sites. It seems very unlikely, however, that the "old entomologists" simply missed it, or that it has colonised recently. The more probable explanation is that these were some of the many sites which were never well examined. Hopefully yet more sites will be found - checking for roosting individuals under shady bridges is a technique which is also recommended.

David Clarke

(Another 1994 record for this species has been received from Neil Robinson, who found a specimen on the River Kent at Natland, Kendal (SD5188) on May 30th. - Ed.)

---

*Dates for your diary*

**Forthcoming meetings in the Winter Programme 1994/5**

**16th November:** "BLACK GROUSE ON THE NORTH PENNINES"

An illustrated talk by Dr. Anne Westerborg

**30th November:** "MOTHS - THEIR STUDY AND DIVERSITY"

An illustrated talk by Dr. Keith Bland

**14th December:** Three short talks from members

"MERLINS AND DIVERS ON THE OUTER HEBRIDES" - Dave Walker

"REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS IN CUMBRIA" - Stephen Hewitt

"RESULTS OF THE SPADEADAM RED SQUIRREL STUDY" - Peter Lurz

**4th January:** "WATER BEETLES"

An illustrated talk by Dr. David Bilton

**18th January:** "BIRDS OF THE NORTH"

An illustrated talk by Richard Mearns

**1st February:** "DORMICE"

An illustrated talk by John Webster

**5th February (Sunday):** Field Meeting to LOCH KEN, GALLOWAY (wild goose chase)

Leader: Geoff Horne. Depart 9.00 am.

**15th February:** "WHY ARE SOME IRISH PLANTS ANGLOPHOBIC?"

An illustrated talk by Neale Taylor

**1st March:** AGM AND MEMBERS NIGHT

Annual General Meeting, followed by contributions from the membership

---

*Subscriptions*

Subscriptions for 1994/5 are now due. The fee remains the same at £5 single, £7 family or £3 junior. Please ensure you renew your membership at an indoor meeting or direct to the Treasurer at 60 Etterby Street, Carlisle.

---

*Limited Edition Prints for Sale*

Carlisle wildlife artist David Cook has very kindly donated a stock of blank greetings cards and five unframed limited edition prints for Society fund-raising. The subject of both is a Barnacle Goose. These will be available at Meetings.

**Cards** (21 × 14cm), with envelope                      30p each

**Prints** (40 × 30cm)                                              £10 each

---

## Greater Yellowlegs at Rockcliffe

A 'phone call from an excited Alan Cremin, a birdwatcher living in Rockcliffe village, at lunchtime on Saturday 15th October, had me gulping down my lunch in unseemly haste, and rushing out of the door. He had had rather distant views of a wader on the River Eden near his home, which had circled around, calling, and finally settled on the riverbank. Although looking much like a Greenshank, a fairly familiar bird at this spot, this bird had immediately looked 'wrong' for Greenshank to Alan's very experienced eye, and he could only think that he had found a *very* rare bird indeed - a Greater Yellowlegs, an American wader, with which he was totally unfamiliar, and for which there had been hardly thirty previous sightings *ever* in Britain.

Out of the contacts Alan had phoned, I was first on the scene (the so-called Carr Beds, about half a mile upstream from the village) and was suitably dismayed to be told that in the meanwhile the bird had done a bunk. Two unpleasantly strenuous hours later, during which we had tramped all up and down the river, out to the fringes of Rockcliffe Marsh itself, where there is enough Yellowlegs habitat to lose a horde of them, we had to admit the bird was lost.

There is a peculiar despondency that descends in these (to me, all too familiar) situations. The finder - Alan - is consumed with misery as he realises that he will not be able to get his record, based on such slender evidence, accepted by the relevant rare bird assessment panel (for such a rare bird, the *British Birds* Rarities Committee, the Twelve Rare Men) - let alone his friends, none of whom is known for suffering fools gladly; will not in all conscience be able to add *Greater Yellowlegs* to his life-list; will not be known for ever after as the lucky blighter that added said bird to the Cumbrian List; and, of more immediate concern, now he thinks about it, will have to spend the rest of the day, or perhaps days, breaking the bad news to breathless and red-faced birders, newly arrived from Orkney (or wherever). The intended corroborator - myself, in this instance - is similarly introspective: no potential addition to my UK list; no chance to expound (to anyone prepared to listen) upon the critical differences between the alluring Lesser, and the nearly fabulous Greater, Yellowlegs, from expertise gained in foreign parts - apparently the reason one had been invited along in the first place. And for both parties there is the very real frustration of knowing that the blasted bird is very probably pecking away in some hidden creek, no great distance away, stoking up for the next stage of its journey out of our ken, if indeed it hasn't set off already.

However, I have learned over the years that in these situations it is always worth *going back to square one*. (Indeed, failure to follow this very dictum a few years ago, in identical company, in the identical place, and in uncannily similar circumstances, had nearly led me to miss another of Alan's more spectacular finds - the two exquisite summer-plumaged White-winged Black Terns. I'd actually gone *home* on that occasion, being oblivious to the fact that fifty birders were at that moment ogling the birds at zero range back at the Carr Beds, and had to rush out again, with equally unseemly haste, from my tea, to catch them in the gloaming just before they vanished for ever.) So, mercifully, it proved today. When we got back up the Carr Beds (myself and Cara, Alan's dog, both by now visibly flagging) there were the fifty birders - well, fifteen - and the bird, pecking away calmly and tamely, just beyond, as if it had been there all the time, as it probably had. It looked up with mild interest, as we puffed into view, with an expression of "... and where have *you* two been?" on its bland little face, before returning to the more immediate and interesting task of winking elvers out from under small boulders in the creek. The gathering enjoyed much hearty merriment at our expense, when the truth was out.

From that point on, the bird behaved with almost unbroken consideration, and with the tameness and trust with which American waders are often blessed. The news being already out on *Birdline* and on the national paging service, it was amazing to monitor the origins of the cars

as they arrived, from more and more distant origins - their occupants evidently having dropped everything, and sped hither - until dusk intervened. Several dozen people saw the bird that day.

If Alan was furious to be woken from his slumbers very early the following morning (Sunday), well before dawn, by inconsiderate folks slamming car-doors in the street outside, you may imagine how he felt to discover that *he* was the one to blame for it. Here was the vanguard of an army of twitchers, come to see *his* bird, and as he struggled out onto the riverbank, he was horrified to see the dozens upon dozens of dark forms massing along the bank, in the misty pre-dawn, awaiting first light! When the dawn arose, revealing a landscape totally bereft of Yellowlegs, he toyed with leaving at once for foreign parts. Insistent bleepings from the pagers in a dozen Barbour pockets, however, to Alan's heart-felt relief, soon signalled that someone with a mobile phone had relocated the bird downriver, and thereafter the only challenge it presented was at the high tide, taking itself off to a roost a mile or so up the river.

The villagers of Rockcliffe itself seemed to draw upon remarkable reserves of Cumbrian fortitude as they faced the unprecedented invasion of their village, which lasted all that day, and following week too, but they must have been bemused at the vast numbers of cars jamming the village streets, each one disgorging its load of often rather unkempt *off-comers*, who then, with fixed, stony, and eager visages, muttering in low tones to their fellows, laden and clanking with outlandish bulky equipment, hurried off in ragged groups into the far distance, clambering over fences, thrashing through thistle patches, mud-spattered . . . an hour later to return, in parallel droves, trailing back out of the mists, but now relaxed, chatting, cheerful, fulfilled . . .

An estimated 1600 people had seen the bird by the time of writing - Wednesday 26th October.

This is perhaps the first time that North Cumbria has witnessed a "major twitch" on this scale - the Black Stork in 1985 rather disgracing itself by collapsing and being taken into care (and after release making its way rapidly to Walney Island, where - at least if Tim Dean be believed (and the Twelve Rare Men *did*) - it found *another* of its species!). Just what drives the more fanatical amongst us to squander such amounts of time, energy and resources on chasing rare birds is unclear, and you will probably find the rabid twitcher no more able to provide a justification. However, far be it from *me* to decry rarity-chasing, R for obvious reasons . . . But where twitching overlaps with birding, and birding with bird-watching, and bird-watching with ornithology, I am finding ever more difficult to define!

The Greater Yellowlegs, incidentally, and in case you thought I was never going to get around to discussing the *bird*, rather than the *event*, replaces the Greenshank in northern North America, and although superficially similar, is distinct at close range by virtue of a white rump-patch *not* running up onto the back, a much more spotted appearance on the mantle and especially on the wing-coverts, in all plumages, a straighter beak, and banana- or orange-yellow legs (Greenshanks can have pale yellowish legs as well as the usual pale green). The calls are similar to Greenshank.

The Lesser Yellowlegs is about twice as frequent - or half as rare - as the Greater Yellowlegs on this side of the Atlantic. The Lesser is the American replacement of the Redshank. It has a deserved reputation amongst American birders of being difficult to tell from Greater Yellowlegs. Plumage is very similar indeed, and the two species can only really be separated in the field by structure. The Lesser is lighter in build, and with a proportionately shorter bill - the bill is about the same length as the width of the head from front to back in Lesser, as against about one-and-a-half times longer for the Greater. The call is rather more like Redshank. Both species migrate widely south across North America, in mixed flocks, and winter along both coasts south into Central and South America.

Jeremy Roberts

## Geoff Horne Honoured

Geoff Horne has this year been awarded not one but two medals in recognition of his work with Peregrine Falcons and other raptors over the last 25 years.

Geoff has already attended a ceremony at which the RSPB presented him with their Medal and in December he will receive the Bernard Tucker Medal from the British Trust for Ornithology "For outstanding contribution to the scientific work of the Trust in relation to Peregrine Falcons".

The RSPB citation reads : -

*"Ornithology and bird conservation in the UK has benefited from a long tradition of amateur observers and volunteer conservationists. This tradition continues today and contributes much to our knowledge of birds and our capacity to conserve them.*

*Geoff Horne has made a substantial contribution to the conservation of the Peregrine Falcon in Britain. He has himself monitored Peregrines in northern Cumbria for the last 25 years and has helped coordinate monitoring for the rest of the county - a task now involving coverage of around 100 nesting territories annually.*

*Geoff has taken part in the RSPB's Peregrine protection scheme, involving the marking of young birds and the surveillance of eyries. Monitoring of the Cumbrian Peregrine population has provided vital information in understanding the national recovery of Peregrines.*

*Geoff has personally ringed almost 1,000 young Peregrines in the nest (in fact he has now broken the 1000 Peregrine barrier - Ed.), often in difficult and dangerous situations. He has hung on the end of more ropes off steep crags in the interests of conservation than I am sure he cares to think about. This work has helped us understand the movement and life expectancy of this magnificent bird of prey. Geoff's personal observations of nesting biology, breeding success and sex ratio have added to our understanding of the Peregrine.*

*In addition to his work with Peregrines, Geoff has also monitored populations of the Raven and Buzzard in northern Cumbria, providing important insights into the biology and conservation of these species too.*

*We are delighted to be able to recognise Geoff's contribution as a particularly gifted amateur ornithologist."*

Congratulations, Geoff! - a well-deserved recognition of your many years' hard work.

### Credits

**General editor**

Stephen Hewitt \*

**Word-processing**

Stephen Hewitt and Geoff Naylor

**Layout and D.T.P.**

Jeremy Roberts

Please submit your observations, findings, notes, requests, views, drawings, to the editor for inclusion. Also please make sure we know your views on what you would like to see included.

**Deadline for the next issue: February 10th 1995**

(\*Contact address: Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle CA3 8TP; tel (0228) 34781)