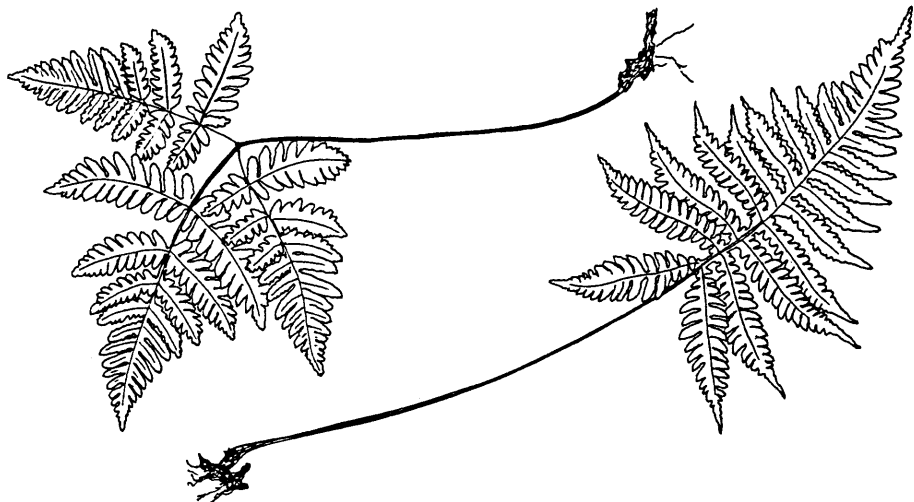


The CARLISLE NATURALIST

Volume 3 Number 2

October 1995

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



Oak Fern

Beech Fern

(Jeremy Roberts)

Contents

Reports on field meetings & workshops

<i>Borrowdale</i> - Geoff Horne	18
<i>Cross Fell</i> - David Clarke & Jeremy Roberts	18
<i>Sunbiggin Tarn & Orton Scar</i> - Geoff Naylor	20
<i>Colvend, Kirkcudbright</i> - Stephen Hewitt	21
<i>Kirkstone Pass & Brothers Water</i> - David Clarke	22
<i>Orton Moss moth trapping</i> - Richard Little	23
<i>Hoverflies Workshop</i> - Jeremy Roberts	24
<i>Fems Workshop</i> - Liz Oliver	25

Notes and records

<i>Porpoise survey of the outer Solway Firth</i> - Roy Armstrong	27
<i>The horsefly <i>Tabanus cordiger</i> at Middlesceugh Woods</i> - Stephen Hewitt	28
<i>The horsefly <i>Hybomitra micans</i> in Cumbria</i> - John B. Parker	28
<i>Some rare and notable insects found at Nunnery Walks, Kirkoswald</i> - Stephen Hewitt	29
<i>Thrift Clearwing moth (<i>Bembecia muscaefornis</i>) at Meikle Ross, Kirkcudbrightshire</i> - Stephen Hewitt	31
<i>A recent record of <i>Carabus nitens</i> from Cumbria</i> - John Read	31
<i>A new site for the Bird Cherry Weevil (<i>Furcicus rectirostris</i>)</i> - John Read	31
<i>Dragonfly news</i> - David Clarke	32
<i>Bird notes</i> - Roy Atkins	33
<i>A correction to two previously published moth records</i> - Geoff Naylor	33

Articles

<i>Lanercost</i> - Geoff Naylor	34
<i>Bats and bridges in Cumbria</i> - Geoff Norman	36
Obituary : David Bailey 1927 - 1995	38

Announcements

<i>Owl Pellet Survey, Distribution Atlases, Forthcoming Meetings</i>	39 & 40
--	---------

Reports on field meetings

22nd April: Borrowdale

Leader: Geoff Horne

Twelve members gathered for the first summer meeting, looking for upland birds in Borrowdale.

From the car park in Great Wood, Nuthatches were seen in the oak trees and feeding on the ground. Willow Warblers were heard singing in the new plantations next to the car park. The Walla Crag Ravens were feeding young in their traditional nest site at the top of the main lower face. Peregrines were seen on their nesting ledges at Falcon Crag.

On Derwent Water a group of seven Red-breasted Mergansers was seen just offshore and a pair of Goosanders appeared close by, giving everyone an opportunity to compare the differences between the species.

After lunch members made their way to Grange and followed the path through the wood. Under Goat Crag we had good views of the resident Ravens feeding their young and Peregrines sailing over the crag in hunting mode.

The party continued up the path round Castle Crag and down to the River Derwent where a Dipper was seen and signs of Great Spotted Woodpecker were found in the wood. Arriving back at Grange a Goldfinch and various tits were seen feeding at a bird table.

Geoff Horne

6th May: Cross Fell (and Swindale)

A comedy of errors led to not one but two field meetings taking place when the nominated leader went to Cyprus (now that *is* bad map reading!), the replacement leader had his car stolen, the second replacement leader led part of the group to Swindale and the remainder actually made it up Cross Fell! - *Ed.*

Swindale

The "breakaway party" elected to visit the very attractive Swindale valley, east of Mardale. This location had within the quite recent memory of Geoff Horne been good for its variety of wading birds and others such as Yellow Wagtail, co-existing with the traditional sheep farming. Despite beautiful sunny conditions, we saw no signs of any of these species - and yet no obvious evidence to explain their decline.

The valleyside birch woods held typical birds such as Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers, along with Redpolls and Chaffinches. Buzzards circled the valley head, Ravens were also seen above the crags, but Peregrines appeared to have ceased occupation. The date was just a little too early for much insect activity (the clear shallow waters of the

beck support many species, including the impressive Golden-ringed Dragonfly, for much of the summer season).

David Clarke

Cross Fell

The eight people who had gathered at Kirkland set off in superbly clear, sunny and hot weather for the summit ridge of the Pennines.

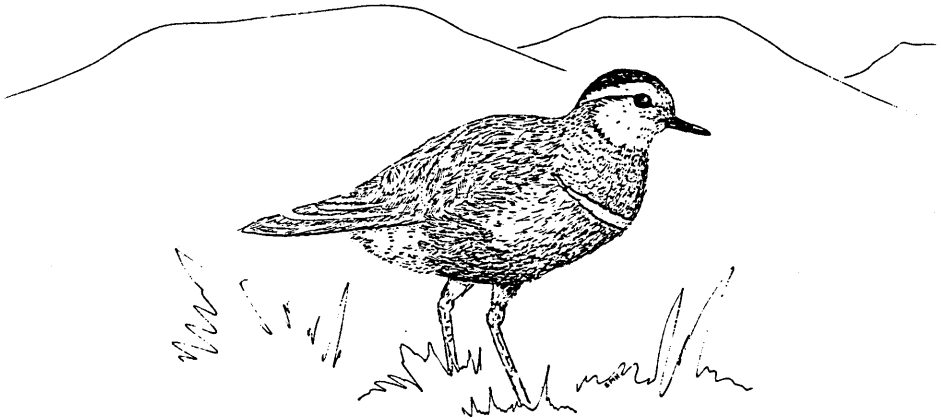
Swifts and House Martins were over Kirkland itself, and in the few trees in the valley just above the village were singing Pied Flycatcher and Redstart. The gorse patches across the stream had Linnets and a male Whinchat, and two buntings, Yellow and Reed.

The open fields beyond had Skylarks and Lapwings, and Meadow Pipits in abundance. A Raven and up to four Buzzards together were soaring over the flanks of the hills.

There was little extra in the moorland stretches between the lower flanks and the high plateaux, and the only Golden Plovers seen or heard were on the northern and eastern flanks of the summit plateau itself. Also in the latter area were Wheatear and a single Dunlin, briefly heard in song.

Early May is perhaps the best time to hope for sightings of the Dotterel passage through the Pennines. The birds tend to loaf for a time before passing on for Scotland or Scandinavia (or both places: the same birds have been shown to breed in either area!). Pendle Hill is also known to attract passage birds, and here they seem to be seen more regularly, perhaps because of the more limited ground available to them. The Lake District hills also attract parties in some years. The writer has however seen the birds on less than half of his many visits to the high tops in migration time over 30 years. With the apparently expanding Scottish population one might imagine that larger numbers might now pass, and perhaps even stay to breed more regularly in the English hills, although this is hardly borne out by the facts.

The passage flocks often seem to gather close to the summit of the ridge, for instance on Cross Fell itself or the Dun Fells, so that they are often best viewed without leaving the Pennine Way. Quite often they are close to the summit cairn, and so it was on this day. A flock of 12 Dotterels was tucked into some hummocky ground, most dozing or preening quietly, and amazingly inconspicuous. Another eight were feeding nearby, and these soon joined the resting flock. Our party kept a respectful distance, as did other observers, and even with the many other walkers and sight-seers around the summit, it was reassuring to see that the Dotterels were not disturbed during the time we watched. They seemed to be enjoying the chance to rest between their migration



from North Africa, and the hectic and probably harrowing nesting-season, on the higher tops further north.

The writer was the last to leave the summit on the return walk and was lucky to hear some subdued piping calls on the steep northern flanks, just east of the Pennine Way; here there turned out to be 22 Dotterels, feeding much more actively, and moving very rapidly over the slopes. These were almost certainly a quite different flock from those seen earlier, making a total for the day of 40!

Besides the birds there was little of natural history interest. Some Ivy-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus hederaceus*) was already in flower in a muddy section of the track at about 1000 feet (303m) altitude, although there was little other indication of spring besides the flowering cotton-grasses (*Eriophorum*). We were surprised to find frog spawn in one of the highest springs on the mountain, on the eastern flanks at about 2,800 feet (854m).

Jeremy Roberts

20th May: Orton and Sunbiggin Tarn Leader: Geoff Naylor

Thirteen people attended the meeting which began from the car park at the summit of the road below Orton Scar. A short energetic climb to the top of the scar was interrupted by attempts to find some of the scarcer molluscs which inhabit the site. Large Chrysalis Snail (*Abida secale*) was found in good numbers but the very rare

Vitrea subrimata (only discovered in Britain during the last 20 years) was elusive. It was eventually identified in a sample collected by Steve Hewitt, along with its similar, commoner, relative *Vitrea contracta*.

Due to the elevated and exposed nature of the site, plants were hard to find, and often stunted in growth. Those found included a number of fairly common ferns and Rue-leaved Saxifrage. Proceeding north to what little limestone pavement remains, we eventually found Limestone Fern in some quantity and, surprisingly, a few very small Early Purple Orchids. The rare Rigid Buckler Fern was not found but was seen later by the leader and David Clarke at Little Asby Scar.

Sunbiggin Tarn was the next rendezvous and, despite the presence of fishermen, held at least 10 Gadwall which, along with hundreds of Black-headed Gulls, regularly breed there. A short walk by the tarn revealed Bird's-eye Primrose and Butterwort. Also pointed out were the remains of Fen Sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) which is rare in northern England but seems not to produce flowers at this altitude. Proceeding towards Tarn Sike more Early Purple Orchids and the scarce Spring Cinquefoil were noted. Shortly afterwards a pair of Red Grouse with newly hatched chicks had to be avoided. Tarn Sike itself proved somewhat disappointing. Snipe and Redshank were in evidence but the anticipated Twite were not. This is an almost unique habitat for certain plants and some snails, but little was found apart from the local Black Bog Rush.

The group then returned to Orton and followed the footpath to the historic Ray's Bridge on Orton Pastures SSSI. Most of the notable plants here were not yet in evidence but the rare Dwarf Milkwort (*Polygala amarella*) was found. Close to this area the very local Upright Redcurrant (*Ribes spicatum*) was identified.

Although most of those attending expressed their appreciation, I felt that a visit one or two weeks later would have been more rewarding.

Geoff Naylor

11th June: Colvend, Kirkcudbright

Leader: David Clarke

Around a dozen members made the trip along the north coast of the Solway to Colvend. The mild climate and diverse topography of this area make it a fascinating area in which to study natural history.

Parking at the Village Hall, David led us up the track to Borean Loch (NX8655) to look for one of the main objectives of the day - the Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*). This nationally notable species is primarily a southern insect. It is not known from Cumbria, but there are a few Scottish sites. Although the cool, dull conditions kept any adult dragonflies off the wing, we did, after much searching,

manage to find one cast larval skin (exuvia) of *B. pratense* among the emergent vegetation at the side of the loch and another of the Four-spot Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*). Geoff Naylor was also pleased to find specimens of the pond snail *Lymnaea palustris*, which is rather local this far north.

As the weather brightened there was more insect activity and the lepidopterists in the party recorded several species. The Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ishnura elegans*) and the nationally notable Variable Damselfly (*Coenagrion pulchellum*) - here at one of its few Scottish sites, were also seen. Eventually a single, adult female, Hairy Dragonfly was observed hawking up and down the main track.

Returning to the cars for lunch, we then moved on to the west side of the White Loch (NX8654). Here several more exuvia of *B. pratense* were found and a freshly emerged adult, still drying its wings, was photographed. Large numbers of adult Variable Damselflies were on the wing. Additional snails recorded here by Geoff included *Planorbarius corneus* (two immature specimens), *Physa fontinalis*, the freshwater limpet *Acroloxus lacustris*, and *Zonitoides nitidus*. A clearing in the woodland fringing the loch came alive with insects in the sunshine. It was a surprise to find a healthy colony of the metallic green Forester moth (*Adscita stictices*) here. This nationally notable species occurs very locally on some of the lowland mosses on the south side of the Solway but has apparently not been recorded from the Colvend 10km square since 1960. Several other moths were noted with the Silver-ground Carpet particularly common. A melanic form of the Clouded-bordered Brindle (*Apamea crenata ab-combusta*) was unfamiliar to the lepidopterists present. Hoverflies too were active, *Leucozona lucorum*, *Eristalinus sepulchralis* and *Volucella bombylans* were among the more interesting species seen. Returning to the cars once more, Lesser Reedmace (*Typha angustifolia*) was identified at the edge of the loch by the roadside, constituting some 50% of the emergent vegetation.

Our final port of call was the SWT reserve at Southwick. Here the ungrazed saltmarsh runs back to the wooded slopes with beds of Common Reed and Yellow Flag growing around freshwater springs and seepages. Several species of butterfly included Large Skipper, Small Heath and Small Copper. Many different flies were associated with specific habitats within the site, with the local wetland hoverfly *Tropidia scita* quite common among the Yellow Flag. The rocky outcrops were very colourful with their cover of lichens and various flowers such as Bloody Crane's-bill, Rockrose and Sheep's-bit. The search for the rare sedge *Carex punctata* proved unsuccessful, but this was not surprising as a chance meeting with the local BSBI vice-county recorder revealed that there is only one, rather inaccessible, plant on this site.

David is to be thanked for a very varied and interesting day in this little known area.

Stephen Hewitt

8th July: Kirkstone/Brothers Water

Leader: David Clarke

After minor delays due to road-hogging tourist buses (and the leader's slightly erratic grid-referencing of the car park!), nine of us were eventually united in the main objective of the day. This was the quest for Britain's only mountain butterfly, the Mountain Ringlet (*Erebia epiphron*). Fortunately, we had Mike Clementson with us, and under his guidance we walked up to the site of a known colony of this insect at 1600 feet. The grassy gully looked to our eyes like hundreds of other such places on the fells - but perhaps not to the butterflies.

Small Heath butterflies were on the wing, but bright sunshine is almost essential for Mountain Ringlets to fly. Tantalisingly, a veil of cloud only rarely allowed the sun to become strong enough to cast slight shadows. Despite this, one Ringlet was briefly on the wing - and was descended upon with alacrity, and relief. We decided it must have been the only one active in Lakeland that day! A male, and obviously not freshly emerged, it obliged the photographers among us, even settling on one of the party, before it flew off. Other interesting species seen on the hillside were a couple of males of the handsome and rather local Wood Tiger Moth (the paler upland variant of this species), and several of the widespread and attractive moth, the Green Carpet.

The usual upland predatory birds all managed at least a fly-past - in turn a Peregrine, a 'thermallung' Buzzard, and a party of Ravens - one member of which had yellow wing-tags.

A Red Admiral and Green-veined White were seen at the head of the pass. The afternoon proved increasingly sultry and still rather overcast. Further pursuit of Ringlets being deemed foolhardy, we moved down to the southern edge of Brothers Water and investigated the fringing marsh. Despite warm conditions and attractive vegetation, there was little insect activity and, to the leader's chagrin at least, no damselflies or dragonflies. A Great Crested Grebe, Sedge Warbler, and Reed Bunting provided some compensation.

David Clarke

14th July: Orton Moss

Leader: Mike Clementson

Was it a landing site for flying saucers? Or was it a venue for a coven of witches? No, it was even more bizarre, a field meeting of Carlisle Natural History Society for an evenings "mothing". Stephen had warned the local inhabitants as to what was going to happen, to forestall panic calls to the police etc.

The evening was not ideal, quite clear with the moon appearing (cloudy warm weather is best), but at least it was dry. The access to Bucknill's Field is a deeply rutted overgrown lane, not geared to the easy transportation of a generator and mothing

equipment. However, two mercury-vapour lamps were set up at some distance from each other. Some 15 (eventually rising to 22) members waited with bated breath as the illuminations were switched on. Moths soon started to arrive "attracted" by the lights and crash-landed onto the white sheets lying underneath. Ungainly scramblings commenced as members tried to bottle the invaders and muttered conferences developed as to the captives' identity with the indispensable help of Skinner's *Moths of the British Isles*, the mothman's bible. Among the first to arrive were the Green Carpet, July Highflyer and Straw Dot. Then two quite spectacular moths zoomed into my light, they were male Drinker moths. Other species included Large Yellow Underwing, Swallow-tailed Moth, Common Wainscot, Common Wave, Barred Straw, Small Rivulet, Large Emerald, Clouded Border, Four-dotted Footman, The Flame, The Snout, Mottled Beauty, Purple Clay, Smoky Wainscot and Beautiful Golden Y.

A nationally rare moth, the Marsh Moth, has been recorded from the site in the distant past (F.H. Day) and though the date was somewhat late for the flight period of this insect, interest was raised by the presence of several small not instantly recognisable moths which bore a superficial resemblance to this rarity. However, its identity was later confirmed as the Small Dotted Buff.

The meeting ended with the generator fortuitously running dry at about midnight. A somewhat ungainly ritual took place in total darkness as scattered equipment was retrieved from the long grass. A tortuous return took place along the lane whose ruts appeared to have deepened.

The above list is a personal one; other members may have additional names for the record. Many thanks to Mike Clementson for leading the meeting and to Brian Spencer for helping me back with my generator. I hope the members attending found it an informative and enjoyable experience, as I did.

Richard Little

5th August: Hoverfly Workshop

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

Early August suited the hoverflies very well, but a number of potential human participants were away on migration. Nonetheless, the seven beginners, and their tutor, Stephen Hewitt, amply made up in enthusiasm, and in some cases progress, what they lacked in numbers.

With sheaves of notes prepared by Stephen on the species so far recorded in Cumbria (a draft list, as he was at pains to point out to us), and a key to those species, we were ready to start. With skilful use of a smart microscope/video link, and overhead transparencies, Stephen led us through the key using representative specimens from the Tullie House Museum collection. This gave some familiarity with the nomenclature of insect parts, and with the aid of dissecting microscopes, lenses, and

several copies of the syrphidologist's bible, Stubbs' *British Hoverflies*, it became clear how one might make progress with naming. Indeed, those of the group with fresher more agile minds (than this contributor) were trotting off scientific names with some aplomb.

As a last exercise before lunch, we tried to name some "unknown" specimens from the collection; however, it did seem to be the case that our tentative identifications needed checking against the excellent illustrations in Stubbs, when it was usually obvious at a glance whether we were correct or not.

After lunch the group moved to Oulton Mere north of Wigton, where, in increasing heat, and with pooters and nets, many species of hoverfly were examined, most of them feeding on the various flowers of thistles, knapweed, sneezewort, etc, around the main pool. With the commoner ones being caught over and over again, familiarity was soon gained. An encouraging majority of flies could be named with confidence in the field, and only a few specimens needed Stephen's checking back at the museum. Such was the absorbing interest in the Syrphids that even the bites of the impressive horsefly *Chrysops relictus* caused little distraction.

The final list of 19 species of hoverfly, recorded in only a couple of hours in a very small area, gives an idea of the variety and interest of this little group, with some 260 species in Britain and around 180 presently known from Cumbria. Besides the expected common species, most noteworthy were the local *Neoascia tenur*, *Chrysogaster cemiteriorum* (= *chalybeata*) and *Eristalinus sepulchralis*, as well as the nationally notable *Lejogaster splendida*.

At least one of the participants has sent off for their own copy of Stubbs, and we may hope for a string of new records coming along in the future. Grateful thanks were expressed to Stephen for his work both before and on the day to make the workshop such a success.

Jeremy Roberts

2nd September: Ferns Workshop

Leader: Jeremy Roberts

The morning found 23 of us grouped around tables in the Tullie House Activity Room, poring over fern specimens and being guided by Jeremy's admirable presentation on the problems and pitfalls of fern identification. His excellent key, specially written for the occasion, provided the basis for a very enjoyable (and painless) learning process. Geoff Naylor and Mike Porter had been invited along as 'plants' (sorry!) to provide additional expert help.

The afternoon field visit was spent along the west side of Thirlmere, where the damp conditions seemed entirely appropriate to the needs of ferns, if not of naturalists. Our

first species, Brittle Bladder Fern, growing in permanent shade on a mortared stone wall, required a subtle 'hint' from Margaret Roberts to help us find it!

We then headed back along the road towards Launchy Gill, finding new species as we went. The old stone wall shouldering the road was positively bristling with ferns. Armed with our new knowledge and the guidance of our experts, we soon started to recognise the various species from amongst the mass.

There were abundant Male and Parsley Ferns, with frequent Scaly Male and Broad Buckler Ferns, as well as Common Polypody and Bracken. Less conspicuous amongst these were Lemon-scented Fern, Lady Fern and Maidenhair Spleenwort. With special guidance from Jeremy as to the right spot, we also found Rustyback Fern.

As a brief change from ferny things, Jeremy was able to point out the scarce Alpine Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea alpina*), growing in woodland just beyond the roadside.

Feeling ever more confident, we headed into Launchy Gill itself, starting in the gully at the bottom. Having scrambled over a rocky stream-bed, we were rewarded with some good patches of Wilson's Filmy Fern, which can so easily be passed over as being a moss. Hard Fern and Hard Shield Fern were also just here.

It was then time to ascend the wooded climb, with promise of Mountain Male Fern and Northern Buckler as our reward. En route, we passed abundant growths of Beech Fern, in one place growing side by side with the less common Oak Fern. In more open areas higher up we began to see clumps of the Fir Club-moss - one of the fern-relatives we had heard about earlier in the day. Amongst the overgrown rocky scree we finally found what were pronounced to be 'definitely possible' specimens of both of the two species we had been looking for.* For good measure, Joan Bailey spotted a single plant of the uncommon moorland orchid, Lesser Twayblade.

Everyone agreed the day had been a great success.

Liz Oliver

(* These did indeed seem to be Mountain Male and Northern Buckler on closer inspection of specimens later, although neither Mike Porter nor I were prepared to commit ourselves totally - tricky species!
Jeremy Roberts)

Editor's note: we intend to produce more copies of Jeremy's Fern key, and also his earlier guide to Sedges, for general release later this session.

Porpoise survey of the outer Solway Firth, 18th August 1995

16 species of cetacean (whales, dolphins and porpoise) are regularly recorded around the coastline of Britain. In spite of being at the top of their food chain, and therefore the best indicators as to the health of the marine environment, practically no monitoring of cetacean populations is carried out in Britain. Apart from a couple of resident populations of Bottle-nosed Dolphins, monitoring only comprises reports of strandings and sightings. Without systematic coverage (including the monitoring of negative results and effort involved) these data are almost impossible to use in assessing population changes.

In response to this lack of information, the Seawatch Foundation (a branch of the Mammal Society) has been carrying out systematic surveys around the coast of Britain, using volunteers and whatever access to the sea they could get (e.g. fishing boats, ferries). We organised a group of voluntary wardens from the Solway Rural Initiative, with some additional recruits from Carlisle Natural History Society, for our survey and were fortunate enough to have Allerdale District Council cover most of the cost of boat hire. So, with our team of volunteers we set off at 7am on 18 August from Maryport. We cruised until late afternoon, covering a triangle from Maryport to Heston Island off the north shore, back across the outer Solway heading south-west and then back to Maryport.

During the first half of the day, the conditions were a bit choppy for detection of most cetaceans, but Geoff Norman and Roy Atkins managed to find us a few Porpoises. We also saw small flocks of Manx Shearwaters and larger groups of Common Scoter. Around the back of fishing boats we saw several Great Skuas and the odd Arctic Skua harassing the very many gulls and fewer Gannets.

During the middle of the day, the sea calmed down completely, producing the millpond conditions that are ideal for finding Porpoises. Unlike Dolphins, Porpoises practically never jump clear of the water; instead, only the head, part of the back and the distinctive triangular dorsal fin break the surface. This low rolling motion at the surface can be very difficult to spot if there is any kind of swell. True to form, the numbers of Porpoises we found increased, particularly around large sand-banks. In all we recorded 16 Porpoises. This may not seem a large number, but as half of the day was unsuitable for systematic counting, I consider this to be a very good result. From one survey we can only gain a glimpse as to the importance of the area for feeding Porpoises, but the glimpse we had suggests that the outer Solway is an important feeding area for the species.

What of other species? We had hoped to perhaps meet with some Bottle-nosed Dolphins in the outer Solway as the habitat appears perfect, and we have had reports throughout the summer of at least one individual approaching boats west of St Bees. Unfortunately we did not find him, but he was reported to us as having been several

miles further south during the afternoon.

Monitoring of cetacean populations is particularly important in the Irish Sea. The low flushing rate of the area and the large number of heavy industries, power stations etc. mean that pollution hotspots are present throughout the area. Recently, post mortem examinations of seals and Porpoises from the Irish Sea have revealed extremely high levels of pollutant burdens, particularly pesticides and heavy metals. The impact of pollution on cetacean populations is impossible to assess in Britain as we do not have even the most basic baseline information required. What we need is funding and volunteers to carry-out systematic surveys over a long period of time. If anyone is interested in helping us try to achieve this, then please contact us via the Society.

Roy Armstrong

The horsefly Tabanus cordiger at Middlesceugh Woods

On 23 June 1995, while accompanying John B. Parker on an entomological field trip I found a single female of this species "loafing" on a fence post at the south-western edge of Middlesceugh Low Wood (NY401406). *T. cordiger* is a very scarce and local species and is classified as nationally notable. I am aware of only three previous records for the county from specimens in the Tullie House collection. Two were taken at Great Salkeld by F.H. Day in 1901 and 1904, and the third was found by Day at his kitchen window in Carlisle in 1918!

This species has been reared from the gravel of streams in or near woods and most records for adults relate to broad-leaved woodland (Falk 1991, *A review of the scarce and threatened flies of Britain*, NCC). Post-1960 records for this species are restricted to the New Forest, Wealden Hampshire and Wales.

Stephen Hewitt

The horsefly Hybomitra micans from Martin Tarn, Oulton

On 12 June 1995 I visited the roadsides to the south of Martin Tarn (NY2551). Following a wet morning, the early afternoon sun brought numerous flies to the umbels. The horsefly *Hybomitra micans* was present in some numbers and voucher specimens were taken.

This species is classed as "vulnerable" (Falk 1991, *A review of the scarce and threatened flies of Britain*, NCC) having undergone a substantial decline. Post 1960 records include Radnorshire, Windsor Great Park and South Wales.

Two recent Cumbrian records are Orton Moss (NY3454) 10 June 1993 and Braithwaite Moss (NY2325) 13 June 1993, found by Stephen Hewitt on both occasions. Stephen's Orton Moss record compliments F.H. Day's records for Orton 1904 -1930.

All the Cumbrian records are from the second week in June, suggesting a very short flight period and the probable discovery of more sites given more intensive recording.

From a national viewpoint, the concentration of records in north Cumbria suggest that the south Solway mosses and outliers are of prime importance to the survival of this vulnerable fly in the British Isles.

John B. Parker

Some rare and notable insects found at Nunnery Walks, Kirkoswald

During a brief family outing to Nunnery Walks (NY5342) on 3 June 1995 I came across a well developed sap run on the trunk of a large Beech tree. Several species of woodland hoverfly are known to feed as larvae in the fermenting fluids of such sap runs and I was pleased to find adult hoverflies of the genus *Brachiopa* on the trunk of the tree around the sap run. I later identified the species as *B. insensilis*, a nationally notable fly not previously recorded from Cumbria. *B. insensilis* is very inconspicuous and has been regarded as a scarce species largely restricted to southern England. However, by examining likely breeding sites and identifying larvae it has been found to be relatively widespread in Scotland in recent years and is probably more common in northern England than has been realised.

On the same afternoon I caught a stiletto fly among vegetation by the river which I later identified as *Psilocephala rustica*. This rare (RDB3) species has only been recorded from Cumbria once before, from the River Irthing in 1986 (Drake 1991, *Provisional atlas of the Larger Brachycera (Diptera) of Britain and Ireland*, ITE), its known distribution being centred on the Welsh borders. This species is believed to develop as a larva in wet sand along river banks shaded by trees, which certainly fits the habitat of the Eden Gorge at this point.

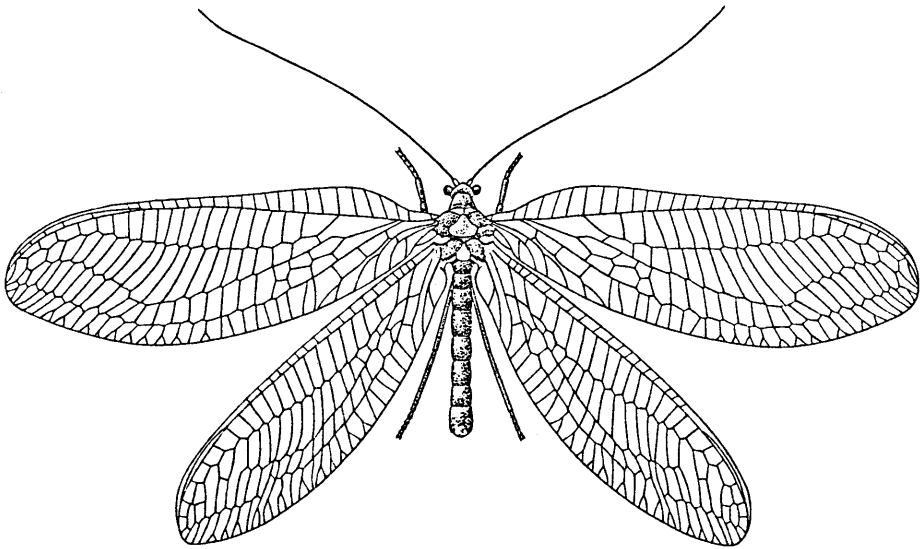
A few days later, while attending a staff training day at Nunnery Hall Hotel on 6 June, I was able to spend the lunch break and late afternoon collecting insects in the woods and along the river. I first visited the Beech tree sap run where I was able to observe female *B. insensilis* ovipositing on the tree trunk around the sap run. The eggs were laid on the bark of the tree rather than in the sap run itself, and at a distance of four to six inches from the edge of the sap run. Further along the footpath I found a large, freshly emerged, dark-coloured lacewing among Wavy Hair Grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) at the base of a dead oak tree. I later identified the lacewing as *Nothochrysa fulviceps*, a species new to Cumbria and not recorded in Britain since 1958 - giving rise to concern that it may have become extinct. This species spends most of its life in the tops of oak trees only overwintering as a larva at ground level, which fact no doubt accounts to some extent for the paucity of records. *N. fulviceps* is reported to come

readily to mercury-vapour lights in eastern Europe where it is more common (Plant 1994, *Provisional atlas of Lacewings and allied insects of Britain and Ireland*, ITE). With this in mind I arranged with Mike Clementson, David Clarke and Richard Little to run a couple of light traps in the woods. This we did on 15 and 28 June. No lacewings came to the light on either occasion although *Chrysopa vittata* and *C. ciliata* were certainly actively flying on the latter evening and various moths were attracted during both sessions. I also tried beating the higher branches of the trees using a net on a long pole - again without success. Although there must certainly be a population of *N. fulviceps* at the site it is clearly a very difficult insect to find.

Another noteworthy lacewing recorded from the riverside at Nunnery on 6 June was the Giant Lacewing (*Osmylus fulvicephalus*) which David Clarke discovered at various sites downstream from Coombes Wood (NY5044) in 1994 (Clarke 1994, New Records of the Giant Lacewing (*Osmylus fulvicephalus*), *The Carlisle Naturalist*, Vol.2 No.2). Further investigation by David and myself this summer has shown this species to be widespread in suitable habitat in the Eden Valley with records from Great Salkeld (NY5534), Acorn Bank (NY6128), Morland (NY6123), Ninekirks (NY5629), River Petteril (NY4351), and Glassonby Beck (NY5639).

I am grateful to Mr Alf Armstrong for permission to collect at Nunnery Walks and to Mike, David and Richard for agreeing to run their light traps in the wood.

Stephen Hewitt



Nothochrysis fulviceps

(John Read)

The Thrift Clearwing moth (Bembecia muscaeformis) at Meikle Ross, Kirkcudbrightshire

On 25 June last, I visited Meikle Ross (NX64). Among the rocky outcrops along the coast I noticed a single specimen of the Thrift Clearwing (*Bembecia muscaeformis*) feeding at the flowers of Wild Thyme. This nationally notable species is very local in coastal situations where the larvae bore into the roots of Thrift. This species has been recorded from Kirkcudbrightshire in the past and there are also records for St. Bees Head. Other noteworthy insects were the bug *Heterocordylus genistae* on Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), and the coastal hoverfly *Eristalinus aeneus*.

Stephen Hewitt

A recent record of Carabus nitens from Cumbria

On 24 April 1995, while on a visit to Devoke Water (SD153967), I was fortunate to find one specimen of this very strikingly-marked ground beetle. It was found running quite quickly over bare peat on the edge of a small area of sphagnum bog at the western end of the tarn. *Carabus nitens* has previously been recorded in Cumbria from the following 10km squares: NY22, 32, 40, 55 and 76. In addition, it has recently been identified from pitfall traps on Wedholme Flow (NY25) during the course of survey work carried out by English Nature.

I wish to thank Stephen Hewitt for providing me with information regarding the distribution of *C. nitens* in the county.

John Read

A new site for the Bird Cherry Weevil (Furcipes rectirostris)

On 31 May 1994, while searching for beetles by the River Gelt just below Binney Bank (NY573538), I found the Bird Cherry Weevil (*Furcipes rectirostris*) in small numbers on old Bird Cherry trees. Initially three adult specimens were beaten from low foliage of one tree just by the river bank and later I managed to obtain a few more specimens from some individual trees further along the river just above the footbridge.

F. rectirostris was only discovered in Britain in 1979 and the first Cumbrian specimens were found by the River Bleng near Hall Bolton, Gosforth (NY00). To my knowledge this is now the most northerly site for the weevil in the county.

I wish to thank John Miles for his help in locating the Bird Cherry trees and for much useful information on the Geltsdale area in general.

John Read

Dragonfly news

1995 is likely to go down in history as an exceptional year for dragonflies. The long hot spell, from early July until the end of August, ensured that both local movements and immigrations of European species into Britain took place on an unusual scale. The growth in numbers of observers has no doubt ensured that the record is more complete than in previous outstanding summers.

Cumbria found itself near the northern limit of these influences, but there were nonetheless some noteworthy reports. These include the first substantiated records of the Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) for the county. The earliest of these came from a garden pond at Drigg (SD09) on 9 July, when Neil Ferguson reported a female egg-laying. If larvae can be found next year this will provide further confirmation. An even more positive record was received from Lowick Common (SD28), where a male was present for a few days and photographed by Ian Hulme on 23 August. (The date was late for this species, and the somewhat frayed wings suggested an old individual). There is also an unconfirmed record from Hethersgill (NY46) in August.

Large numbers of the Yellow-winged Darter (*Sympetrum flaveolum*) reached Britain from Europe during the hot spell. The red-bodied males have extensive yellow on their wing-bases, and are usually quite conspicuous. Occurrence of this species at Heysham Power Station in north Lancashire in early August augured well for movements north into Cumbria. So far, there is one probable record from Killington Reservoir (SD59) on a similar date, though the observation has still to be confirmed. The species was previously recorded on the Solway coast in the 1950s by Ernest Blezard, and at Kingmoor (NY35) in 1945 by F.H. Day.

Species recorded at Heysham also included the Ruddy Darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*), which has established itself in southern Lancashire in recent years. So far there is no suggestion of Cumbria records, but some examples could well have reached us.

As well as these relatively exotic species, the local residents clearly also did well, with good numbers and more widespread records being a feature once the better weather had established.

The hot spell had some negative effects too. Many waters shrank in size or even temporarily disappeared - which may have had adverse effects on the survival or spread of some species. Blackmoss Pool near Armathwaite (NY44) for example, was completely dry by late August. A heath fire devastated about 4 acres at Scaleby Moss (NY46) on 1/2 August. The site is important for the rare White-faced Darter (*Leucorrhinia dubia*). Fortunately, the fire was contained before any of the breeding pools were affected.

Assuming a return to more normal conditions next year, it will be interesting to see whether 1996 (or even 1997) produce any unusual sightings as a result of eggs laid in the

current season. Sites near the southern and coastal fringes of the county hold the most promise of such occurrences.

David Clarke

The hot dry summer has had its effect on other insects too. There have been several sightings of migrant hawkmoths in the county, but the most exciting reports concerned Camberwell Beauty butterflies in early August. I have heard of sightings at Sedbergh (SD69), Burneside (SD59) and Calder Bridge (NY00). There were also two sightings at Armathwaite (NY54) within a few days in mid-August. Finally there is even a rumour of a Monarch butterfly seen at Calder Bridge - watch out for Bill Kidd's insect report in the next issue of Birds in Cumbria.

- Ed.

Recent bird sightings

Thinking back over the spring and summer since the last issue, I find I can think of few birds of note in Cumbria for the entire period! It then occurs to me that this is because I saw none of the really good birds that did turn up.

The Ring-necked Duck on Killington (which stayed from April to 4th July at least, when it moulted into eclipse plumage and became very difficult to detect) never seemed to be there when I went, and a Broad-billed Sandpiper photographed at Bowness-on-Solway (6 & 11 May) was seen by no-one but the photographer. Both Black and White Storks, as well as Black Kite, flew over the county but didn't stop, and a Crane on Duddon Moors stayed only a few hours. I didn't make the trek to Cavendish Dock to see the Avocet, and I didn't hear about the Temminck's Stint at Rockcliffe in May until too late.

It seemed pointless to go to Siddick Pond to try and see the Quail in June, but I really should have gone to see the Solway skua passage, with 107 Pomarine Skuas seen this spring.

The other record of note is one of breeding Little Ringed Plover in the north of the county - but I wouldn't want to disturb them even if I'd known where they were!

I think I'd better try harder this autumn!!

Roy Atkins

A correction to two previously published moth records

In *The Carlisle Naturalist* Vol. 2 No. 2 I wrote a list of selections from the moth trap. Two of these were mistakenly identified as Plain Wave (8 July) and Dotted Border (26 July). These have subsequently proved to be Lead Belle and Small Fan-footed Wave respectively. The latter is a common species throughout Britain, but Lead Belle is scarce in Cumbria.

I am grateful to Bill Kydd for the correct identifications.

Geoff Naylor

Wildlife in the Lanercost area

There is nothing remarkable about Lanercost. It is a small well-scattered community close to the River Irthing, two or three miles north-east of Brampton. It has a colourful history centred around the ancient priory. King Edward I spent so much time here that it could have been the capital of England in the early 14th century. The history of the Earls of Carlisle is inescapably woven into the scene, with their ancestral home of Naworth Castle only a short distance away and many graves of their forbears to be seen at the priory. History assumes greater importance with the close proximity of Hadrian's Wall which is an important feature of the northern escarpment of the Irthing and is well preserved at several places.

Enough of history - natural history is the subject in question. There are no great rarities to be found here but the area has a wealth of notable plants, birds, mammals and, for those who take the trouble, snails and other smaller inhabitants. It is a peaceful place to go for a walk and there is usually something of interest.

The woodlands along the sides of the valley are reliable places to find most of the common warblers in summer. Amongst these are Wood Warblers and other choice visitors such as Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Common Sandpiper and resident Dippers, Grey Wagtail and the occasional Kingfisher. Goosanders nest in hollow trees at the riverside, a few Buzzards have nested recently, while Goshawks are a possibility. A Rosefinch was a sensational visitor in the 1980's while Crossbills were abundant in 1990.

Mammals include Roe Deer, Pipistrelles and Daubenton's Bats, Badgers and Red Squirrels regularly, and, more recently, Otters have been regularly recorded.

Flowering plants are one of the main features. Amongst these, orchids are always a favourite and here there are Early Purple, Bird's-nest, Greater Butterfly and Broad-leaved Helleborine as well as the commoner "spotted" orchids. Other notable flowers are Meadow Saxifrage, Pellitory-of-the-wall, Pink Purslane, Globe Flower, Cowberry, Northern Bedstraw, Fairy Foxglove and a few Juniper bushes.

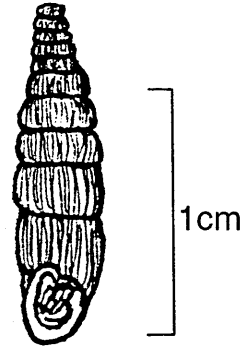
The area includes the woodlands managed or formerly managed by the RSPB. Quarrybeck Wood and Coombe Crag are well worth a visit but the latter is steep and treacherous. Boothby Bank is very difficult to access and is even more steep and difficult; however, a walk along the northern bank of the river from Lanercost Old Bridge will eventually bring you opposite this site, where Kingfishers have bred recently.

Other parts of the area worth seeing are Holme Head, approached from the picnic site at NH571637 (riverside plants and birds); St. Mary's Bridge - either side of the river, eastwards from NY564639 - and the woods north of Naworth Castle, best seen from the path running east from NY554634, opposite the hotel.

Turning finally to invertebrates, butterflies include most of the commoner species; little

is known about the moths, but Clouded Magpie has been seen at Coombe Crag. Some scarce snails have been found, mostly in the old ivy-covered walls around the Priory, the Old Bridge and along the Roman Wall with its associated quarries and lime kilns. *Clausilia dubia* is particularly addicted to such places. It is a large distinctive snail but restricted to the northern Pennines. *Vertigo pusilla* and *Vallonia costata* have been found recently and are far removed from their normal distribution.

Clausilia dubia (Geoff Naylor)

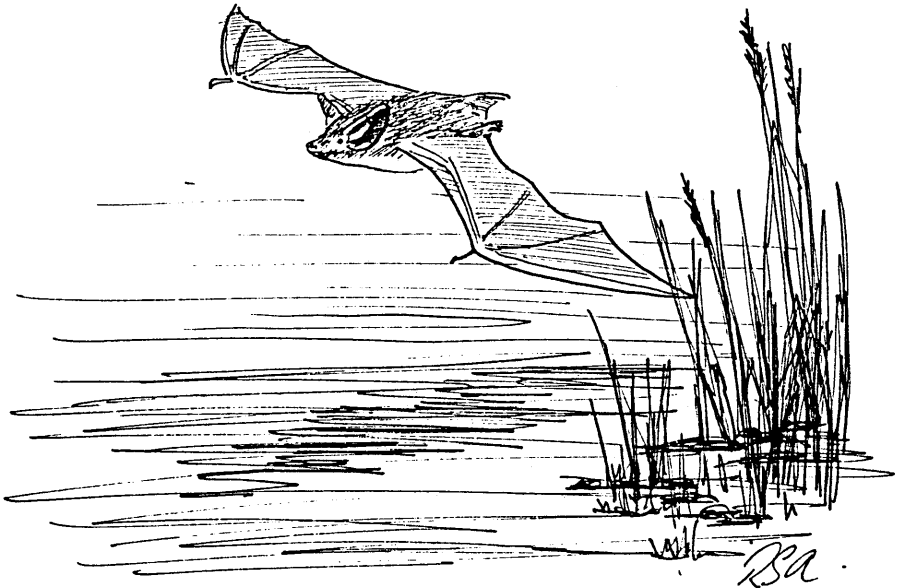


A very scarce bug - *Saldula fucicola* - was seen here by one of our early members (George Routledge) in 1927.

All the woods in the area produce a good crop of fungi in the autumn but Coombe Crag and Quarrybeck are probably better than most.

These observations have been made largely over the past five years, although some go back as much as 25 years. There are many more parts of this area awaiting naturalists and potentially many interesting discoveries to be made.

Geoff Naylor



(Roy Atkins)

Bats and bridges in Cumbria

It is well known that bridges provide roost sites for bats and a current survey by the Cumberland Bat Group and the Westmorland and Furness Bat Group has revealed a number of these roosts in Cumbria. The "Bats in Bridges Survey" was initiated in 1993 as a result of increased concern over the loss of roost sites during maintenance work on road bridges. In cooperation with English Nature and Cumbria County Council's highways department the bat groups have been surveying bridges that appear on the Council's list of works.

Bridges are surveyed by inspecting the structure for suitable crevices and inspecting these crevices with a strong torch to establish whether they are used by bats. Sometimes bats are visible in crevices but more often droppings or slight staining are the only evidence of bat use. Bridges are graded according to their potential for roosting bats using a standardised recording form. This allows the bat groups to highlight bridges and individual crevices which are used by bats or have high potential value to bats. English Nature and the bat groups are then consulted before work on these bridges and crevices is carried out.

Survey records up to January 1995 for vice-county 69 (Westmorland and Furness) and July 1995 for vice-county 70 (Cumberland) have now been entered onto RECORDER database package at Tullie House. Table 1 illustrates the number and type of bridge roosts appearing on the database.

Table 1: Bridge Survey Results (n = c. 340)

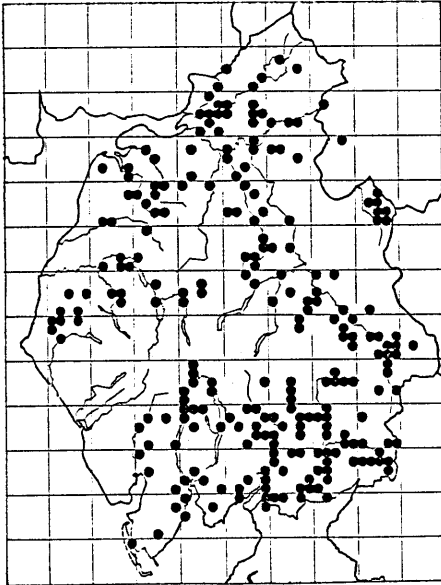
Species	vc 69	vc 70	Total
Natterer's Bat	5	3	8
Daubenton's Bat	8	8	16
Bat sp.	11	8	19
Total	24	19	43

Further roosts have been discovered recently taking the total number of bridge roosts in Cumbria to at least 50. The number of bats seen in individual roosts varies from a single bat to over 40 and all bats identified to species have been Natterer's bats (*Myotis nattereri*) or Daubenton's bats (*Myotis daubentoni*). Bridges provide the type of roost site favoured by these two species and the feeding habits of both are strongly associated with water. Other species have been recorded in bridges in other counties, including Noctules (*Nyctalus noctula*) in Northumberland, so there is certainly potential for finding new species in bridges in Cumbria. Natterer's and Daubenton's bat roost records are of particular value however as these species are rarely found in building roosts or bat boxes, unlike the more common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*). All of these species roost in trees but tree roosts are rarely found.

Comparison of maps 1 and 2 below shows that the distribution of bridge roosts is directly related to survey effort, and future surveys in central Cumbria are expected to fill in the obvious gap in bridge roost records in this area.

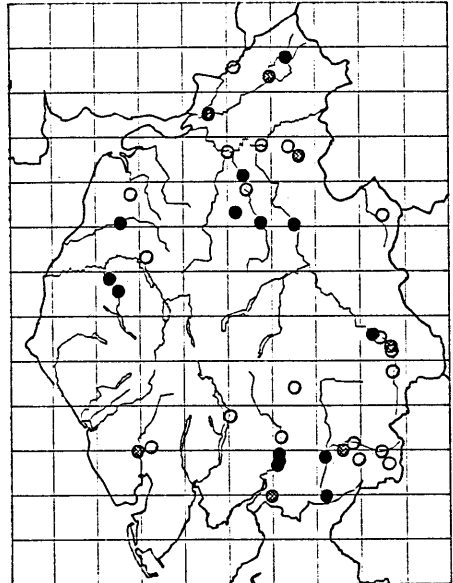
Map 1: Bridges surveyed

Key: ○ pre - 1990 Symbol: Tetrads
● 1990 - 1995



Map 2: Bridges with bat roosts

Key: ● Daubenton's Bat Symbol: Points
⊗ Natterer's Bat
○ Bat sp.



The figures from Table 1 suggest that about 12 % of bridges support bat roosts. After accounting for survey bias (ie. selective surveying of good bridges), and bridge roosts entered onto the database before negative results were recorded, the true figure is probably closer to 10%.

The Highways Department is responsible for about 2000 bridges and the survey results to date suggest that a further 150 roosts remain to be found. Railway bridges and viaducts also have the potential to hold bat roosts, and one disused bridge abutment is already known to hold a Daubenton's bat nursery roost. The number of railway bridges in the county is not known at present but when added to the road bridges that are yet to be surveyed it will certainly provide the bat groups with survey work for several years to come.

Geoff Norman

David Bailey 1927 - 1995

Members and other friends of David were much saddened by his death at the beginning of May this year, after bravely fighting a long illness. He had been on the Society's Council for many years and made a valuable contribution, and his particular qualities of friendliness, good humour and approachability were evident to all.

David's training and career had been in architecture - leading him to become Assistant Chief County Architect for Cumbria before his retirement in 1988. His managerial experience proved especially valuable in the various supporting roles and activities he performed for the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. For very many years he was Chairman of its Reserves Committee, and along with Eileen Rhone, he was also one of the few voices for the north of the county on the Trust's Council. His commitment to conservation and diplomatic skills served the Trust well - not least in his long service, with his wife Joan, as joint Manager for Rockcliffe Marsh Reserve on the Solway.

Much of his natural history work was hidden from public view, and members will remember him most for informative presentations on his special interests - Rockcliffe, and more exotically, the flora and fauna of the eastern Mediterranean countries. The latter arose in part through family connections.

We extend our sincere condolences to Joan and all of David's family. The Society has given a donation to CWT in his memory.

David Clarke

Announcements

Owl Pellet Survey

I am keen to receive owl pellets from around the county in order to identify the remains of the small mammals on which they are feeding. Identifying skeletal remains in owl pellets is a very effective way of obtaining records of mice, shrews and voles which, although generally common, are seldom seen. There is also always the chance of discovering new areas for scarce species such as the Dormouse. If you find any owl pellets please seal them in a polythene bag together with information on the date and place (with Grid Ref.) of collection, your name and address and the species of owl if known. Pellets collected from known sites on a monthly basis will be very useful.

Please send any pellets (sealed in a polythene bag) to me at Tullie House and clearly marked "Owl Pellet Survey". Each contributor will be informed of the results of the analysis of their pellets.

Several members have already volunteered to help dissect pellets and identify prey remains: please let me know if you would like to be involved.

Please note that nesting birds should not be disturbed without a special licence.

Stephen Hewitt

Distribution Atlases

The Museum has recently produced several provisional distribution atlases on various groups of wildlife in Cumbria. Currently available titles are: -

<i>Butterflies in Cumbria</i>	<i>(up to 1994)</i>	£1.00
<i>Mammals in Cumbria</i>	<i>(up to 1994)</i>	£1.00
<i>Dragonflies in Cumbria</i>	<i>(up to 1994)</i>	50p
<i>Grasshoppers in Cumbria</i>	<i>(up to 1993)</i>	50p
<i>Amphibians in Cumbria</i>	<i>(up to 1994)</i>	50p

Prices include postage; please make cheques payable to "City of Carlisle".

Winter Meetings 1995/96

Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Street, Carlisle. Meetings start promptly at 7.15pm (doors open at 6.50pm).

4th October: "BIRDS OF THE SOLWAY" - Mike Carrier

8th October (Sunday): (Field Meeting) FUNGUS FORAY, KINGMOOR NATURE RESERVE. Leader Geoff Naylor. Depart Carlisle College 12.30pm. Meet (NY388579) 12.45pm.

18th October: "THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE SOLWAY MOSSES"
- Frank Mawby

1st November: MEMBERS' NIGHT

15th November: "THE COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME"
- David Shaw

29th November: "BOTANY IN THE BORDERS" - Dr. Rod Corner

13th December: "FARMERS, FORAGERS, SLAYERS AND SLAVERS"
- Dr. Gary Skinner

17th January: "LANDSCAPE AND ROCKS OF THE EDEN VALLEY"
- Dr. Eric Skipsey

31st January: "THE RETURN OF THE POLECAT" - Dr. Johnny Birks

3rd February (Saturday): (Field Meeting) LOCH KEN, GALLOWAY (wild goose chase). Leader: Geoff Horne. Depart Carlisle College 9.00am.

14th February: "WILDLIFE OF THE PICOS DE EUROPA" - Phil Taylor

28th February: A.G.M. AND MEMBERS' NIGHT

Full programme and membership application form available from the Secretary, Carlisle Natural History Society, c/o Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle CA3 8TP.

Credits

General editor	Stephen Hewitt*
Word-processing	Stephen Hewitt, Geoff Naylor & Geoff Norman
Layout and D.T.P.	Jeremy Roberts
Artwork	Roy Atkins, Stephen Hewitt, John Read, Jeremy Roberts & Geoff Naylor

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: 2nd February 1996

*Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle CA3 8TP; tel (01228) 34781