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Lakeland Naturalist



— *a journal of Cumbrian Natural History*

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Address: c/o Tullie House Museum, Castle Street, Carlisle CA3 8TP

Tel: 01228-618736; email: steve.hewitt@tulliehouse.org

Editor: David Clarke: david.clarke19@virgin.net; 01228-560117

Editorial Panel: Roy Atkins, David Clarke, Stephen Hewitt, Jeremy Roberts

Layout & DTP: *Jeremy Roberts*; cover & centre: *David Clarke*

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Lakeland Naturalist publishes material on all aspects of the natural history of Cumbria. General articles, results of personal research, news items, records and items of relevance to Cumbrian natural history and naturalists are welcomed. Material accepted for publication must not be submitted in a similar form to any other journal or magazine.

Material offered for publication should be in the formats used in this issue. Computer files should be in rich text format or Microsoft Word and e-mailed to the Editor, or submitted on CD/DVD accompanied by a paper copy. **Bold** and *italic* may be applied to text, but no other formatting should be applied. References should be given in full at the end of the article or note. Authority names for species, where given, should be in full. Line illustrations should be in black ink and must be originals. All figures and tables should be submitted as separate files. Good quality photographs are welcomed where these relate to submitted text. Whilst every care will be taken of original artwork, the Editor can not be held responsible for any loss or damage. Authors of papers will be provided with PDF format copies on request. The Editor reserves the right to submit papers to a referee, and to reject items.

Opinions expressed in *Lakeland Naturalist* are not necessarily shared by the Council of the Carlisle Natural History Society or its Editorial Panel.

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Next issues: deadlines for final copy

1st October 2014 & 1st March 2015

Cover:

Wildlife Reports – October 2013 to March 2014

The following is a selective extract from the many interesting reports received since the previous issue. All records form part of computerised data, traceable to named recorders, held by Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre at Tullie House Museum.

The autumn and winter were generally mild, with very few frosts and only a few days with snow or sleet. November was one of the driest on record but for the remaining months it was wet and unsettled with frequent storms in December and January. March was a relatively settled month.

Birds

A remarkably late **Swallow** was seen by LS off Campfield Marsh on 28 October. **Bramblings** were not seen often until December when a flock of 300 was reported from Talkin Tarn by NF on 23rd. They fed on beech mast for a week or two thereafter. A single **Snow Bunting** was at Allonby on 21 November (JC) and SH reported two flocks, one of 15 on Skiddaw summit and 9 lower down on 3 March. **Twite** were quite scarce this autumn but a small flock of 26 was at Grune on 19 November and over 100 on Border Marsh on 14 December. An unusual bird inland was the immature **Shag** that dropped in to Talkin Tarn – noted by CH on 26 December. The severe gales in December and January caused a seabird ‘wreck’ and many **Razorbills** were found dead along the Cumbrian shoreline including 67 counted by SH at Drigg Point on 27 February along with a few **Guillemot** and other species. There were a few notable birds, including a **Black Guillemot** found by NF on Talkin Tarn on 20 December (plate 1). After closer scrutiny he submitted it to BOU as a possible *C. g. mandtii** – the Arctic/Greenland breeding form. Either way, it is an exceptional inland record. On 1 January CA found a **Chiffchaff** near Dalston having features of the Siberian race, *P. c. tristis** (plate 2). The bird was seen by several members through to February.

Early winter **Whooper Swans** were recorded on the Holme Dub 10-11 October, and SG reported 100 dropping into Blackdyke on 15 October. The ‘clean’ harvest of 2013 meant only stubbles were available, apart from 520 near Raby Cote on 5 November (JC): no other large concentrations were seen. Some 6-7000 **Pink-footed Geese** stayed over the autumn often roosting on Wedholme. They were elusive and often kept on the move by shooting. The return movement from Southport was quite late but some 15,000 were present by mid-February. A notable aspect of behaviour was their absence from many regular feeding fields. The **Barnacle Goose** flock using Moricambe Bay seems to grow ever larger and I saw an estimated 10,000 drop onto Whitrigg Marsh on 2 December. This winter there were no sheep on the marshes from Newton to Skinburness and in Mid-March I thought that I had never seen these marshes so heavily goose-grazed. Other notable goose reports were of 3 **Brent Geese** seen flying past Bowness

railings by BW on 5 October and a single **European White-fronted Goose** with the Pinkfeet on Whitrigg Marsh on 9 March (CA). The gales often drive geese inland and on 3 January DC found hundreds of Greylag and Pinkfeet near Cumwhitton for a one day stay. Of wintering **Goosanders**, I counted over 200 at the Soddy Gap Lake near Great Broughton on 25 December.

Jack Snipe featured regularly in reports at Watchtree, Bowness Common, Thornhill Meadows and Red Hall Farm near Wigton. There were also some large concentrations of **Snipe** and FJR counted 88 on Thornhill Meadows on 28 February. **Little Egret** numbers continue to rise and were seen between Burgh Marsh and North Plain. LS reported one regularly roosting in the Gravel Pits Reserve. A **Great Egret** was at North Plain on 16 Feb (RG & SG).

At Garrigill 27 **Black Grouse** (including only 3 'Greyhens') were seen by HK on 30 January. Few **Grey Partridge** records are received, so a covey of 8 seen on stubble near Walby by GB on 30 October was good to see. I had coveys of 7 at Watchtree and 5 at Red Hall Farm. There was a paucity of **Barn Owl** sightings in the autumn but several sightings were received in the early part of the year. It was encouraging to receive **Little Owl** records from Longtown: 10 January (DJ) and 22 March (TR) in Chances Park. Only three records were received for **Hen Harriers**: from CM at Finglandrigg on 9 October; 2 males at Rogersceugh on 10 November (RH) and one with a tracker aerial at Waterhead Common on 7 November (DJ). There were few **Peregrine** records but I had fine views of one chasing a **Golden Plover** on Border Marsh on 19 January, keeping over 5,000 plovers airborne over the high tide period; a pair of Peregrines briefly copulated on 11 March in Borrowdale.

A splendid 13 **Ravens** were seen on 10 November at Mawbray by RG & SG; MC reported birds in January from Kirkoswald on 3rd and at Crosby Garret 26th. Large flocks of **Redwings** and **Fieldfares** were seen on the abundant hawthorn and other berries during October and November by several observers and I saw over 500, mostly Fieldfare, on tall hedges near Abbeytown in November, with several still there in early December. As ever more tall hedges are laid I do wonder what will become of this annual spectacle. The return migration was rather sparse, as were **Waxwings**: DH was the lucky person to see 7 on berries in Elm Street, Carlisle on 22 January. Two **Kingfishers** were seen by RPD on 19 January on the River Petteril, two on the Mill Race, Denton Holme, Carlisle on 22 December RH and one on the Wiza Beck, Wigton on 24 March (MP). **Stonechats** seem to be recovering following the previous cold winters, especially along the Allonby coast but it was pleasing to receive inland records from DJ for a pair on Burgh Marsh opposite Boustead Hill on 20 January. At Thornhill Meadows JC found one of his colour-ringed birds on 28 February, it had been ringed as a nestling near Allonby

on 8 May 2013. **Willow Tits** are just holding on in one or two regular locations and in Finglandrigg a pair were seen by CA on 13 February and in a similar area of Finglandrigg (MA & AA) reported 3 on 9 November. Wintering **Blackcaps** were at Norfolk Road, Carlisle on 13 December (GT) and Dalston Nurseries from 20 December to 4 January (DH).

Chiffchaffs were the first returning migrants, the earliest seen on 10 March (NF) from Finglandrigg Wood. By 16 March they had been reported from several locations by DH, RH, SM, TR and FJR. On 11 March DH reported 3 territorial **Dippers** on the R. Caldew at Cummersdale. **Wheatears** seem to have bypassed the Solway Basin, with upland records from above Dunmail Raise (MR; DC) 25/27 March. The first **Sand Martin** record was at Tindale Tarn on 9 March (SW) but they were scarce until the end of the month. DC reported 10 at Warwick Bridge on 30 March; BJ reported over 100 at Talkin Tarn on the same day. An early **Willow Warbler** was heard singing at Bowness Gravel Pits Reserve on 31 March (DJ) and another at Grune Point (RH). There was a lot of movement on 31 March: **Willow Warblers** were seen at Bowness Gravel Pits (DJ) and Grune Point (RH); DJ also encountered a remarkable flock of 27 **Goldcrests** in the Gravel Pits; whilst on Grune, RH witnessed a large movement of birds, estimated at 1000 an hour, mostly of **Meadow Pipits** but including **Sand Martins**, **Wheatears**, **Siskins** and **Goldfinches**; at Etterby Scaur NF had an early **Blackcap**.

Other records

Late season **Adder** records include 3 at Finglandrigg Wood on 9 October (CM). Autumn records of **Hedgehogs** brought October reports from Drumburgh 20th, and Monkhill 16th (RG) – both road casualties, and from Geltsdale on 15th (GB). **Pipistrelle Bats** were on the wing at Finglandrigg as late as 10 Dec (CM), and another sign of the mild winter was a **Hedgehog** foraging in a bin bag in Penrith on 18 January (FB), whilst one in hibernation was uncovered (and re-covered) by RS in his garden at Broadwath. An active one was reported by (RH) in his Carlisle garden on 1 March. 2 female **Adders** on 28 February at Little Bampton Common (CM) were especially early for this species. **Common Frogs** were active in mid-March and (DH) and (FM) had found large amounts of spawn at Dalston, Finglandrigg Wood, Watchtree and Thornhill Moss between 19 February and 12 March. A day-flying **Brown Long-eared Bat** was seen and photographed by DC on 24 March at Acorn Bank, Culgaith (see Note in next issue). A **Slow-worm** in Dalston churchyard took advantage of March sunshine on 9 March (DH).

A **Large Yellow Underwing** moth on 25 October near Heads Nook (GyH) was the latest ever for this species, reflecting the mild conditions. **Peacock** and **Red Admiral** butterflies were being recorded in early November from Watchtree, Finglandrigg Wood and Dalston (AA). The last of several **Red Admirals** at

Carlisle Cemetery was on 10 November (GH). **Peacocks** and **Small Tortoiseshells** were on the wing again on sunny days in March, with my first of the former in Borrowdale on 11th. Early **Small Tortoiseshells** were seen by DC at Cumwhitton on 10 March. On 30 March he noted 6 **Commas** at Fishgarth Wood, some nectaring on Butterbur; **Bee-flies** (*Bombylius*) were also active there. **Marsh Fritillary** caterpillars were up and basking in the sun at Finglandrigg on 27 February, when a quick count found 43 broods. Brief warm weather in March saw bumblebees flying regularly: **Tree Bumblebees** (*Bombus hypnorum*), still relatively new to the area, were reported on March dates ranging from 11th at Beckermeth (NG) to 28th, Wetheral (FJR).

Stop Press: Earthstar fungi found by David Benham at a sand dune system in the south of the county in late 2013 have recently been confirmed as the **Tiny Earthstar** (*Geastrum minimum*). This is only the second UK site for this BAP species, and will be more fully reported in the next issue.

Recorders: AA Anne Abbs; MA Mike Abbs; CA Colin Auld; FB Frances Bell; DC David Clarke; JC John Callion; MC Mike Clementson; RPD Richard Dixon; GB Glen Bryson; NF Nick Franklin; NG Nigel Gilligan; RG Russell Gomm; SG Sara Gomm; SG Sam Griffin; GyH Gary Hedges; SH Steve Hewitt; CH Chris Hind; DH David Hickson; RH Robin Hodgson; GH Geoff Horne; BJ Bob Jones; DJ David Johnston; HK Harry Kay; CM Chris Mawby; SM Shelagh Mawby; MP Mike Porter; TR Tristan Reid; MR Mo Richards; FJR Jeremy Roberts; RS Rob Shaw; LS Liz Still; GT George Tinkler; SW Stephen Westerberg; BW Bob Wright; *Weather information from Tony Matthews (Drumburgh Weather Station). As usual, un-credited records are usually my own.*

Frank Mawby

*[Subspecies identifications: assignment of *one individual* to a particular subspecies or geographical race is usually difficult, often requiring examination and measurement of a captive bird. The characteristics of subspecies apply to *populations*: the ranges of variation of individuals within these can overlap, or be subject to other factors. Ed.]

Field Meetings

The meeting to **Solway and Loch Ken** (15 February 2014) was cancelled owing to poor weather.

The following report was unavailable for the previous issue:

Field Meeting: Borrowdale, 29 June 2013

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

We convened on the slopes below Honister Pass, where Steve was hoping to lead us to see Mountain Ringlet butterflies on the higher ground. As conditions remained too cool and very cloudy for this sun-loving insect to fly, we spent some time exploring the immediate area. The flushes hereabouts had an abundance of Dioecious Sedge, as well as the Flea Sedge (*Carex dioica* and *C. pulicaris*). Hillside rock outcrops had various widespread 'low-alpines' including Mossy Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hypnoides*), Alpine Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla alpina*) and Lesser, Fir and Alpine Club-mosses (*Selaginella selaginoides*, *Huperzia selago* and *Diphasiastrum alpinum*). Small Heaths were the only butterfly species seen. Specimens of the mottled-winged snail-killing fly *Dictya umbrarum* were swept in this area. Honister Pass is one of seven known Cumbrian sites for this nationally notable species, which has a scattered distribution in upland areas of the UK. The larvae are parasitoids of pulmonate snails.

We then moved lower down the valley in search of other habitats and better weather, using the Bowder Stone car park as a base. (At the car park entrance Jeremy pointed out Flattened Meadow-grass (*Poa compressa*), which is quite scarce in the county.) Our explorations took us northwards, first visiting to the National Trust's Cumacatta Wood. This delightful sheltered mire always has much of interest. Several spikes of Heath Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia borealis*) were sampled for their supposedly 'carnation-scented' flowers. Scattered spikes of Lesser Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*) were also here, but our attempts to re-find the tiny Bog Orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa*) were unproductive. (It is known from this site, but may have declined.) The sprawling shoots of Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) were opening their tiny pink buds. The sunnier conditions here produced some dragonfly activity, with Golden-ringed Dragonfly and Keeled Skimmers on the wing. Many exuviae of the latter species were found around the runnels, though the late season meant that the males were only just starting to develop mature colours. Steve searched many *Sphagnum* hummocks for larvae/pupae of the specialist ant-nest predator hover-fly *Microdon myrmicae* without success, although it has been recently recorded from this site. A freshly emerged Bright Horsefly (*Hybomitra distinguenda*) so named for the bright orange patches on the sides of its abdomen was found close to its recently vacated pupa amongst the *Sphagnum*. The picture-winged fly *Tephritis conura* was swept from thistles. These small flies, whose larvae form galls in the heads of Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), have distinctively marked wings. This is a northern

species, widespread in Scotland and also occurring in upland areas of England and Wales. There are just four other Cumbrian locations recorded for it at present.

Moving on to Grange, we paid a brief visit to a remarkable roadside oak near Hollows Farm, the trunk of which has possibly as much of the ‘lungwort’ lichen *Lobaria pulmonaria* as can now be seen at any single site in the county. The shadier side of the tree had smaller amounts of another *Lobaria*, *L. virens*. Both species are rare and continuing to decline in our area.

A final ‘push’ took us up the valley under the towering heights of Castle Crag. This area is well known for the scarce northern fern, Forked Spleenwort (*Asplenium septentrionale*). Formerly more abundant on the crags of this area, a number of clumps thrive on the rocky scree slopes near the path. We enjoyed the close views and noted how its rather grass-like features make it blend well into the surrounding vegetation – possibly a conservation advantage! A sheltered cliff face in the oakwoods had sheets of the moss-like Wilson’s Filmy-fern (*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*). Fine patches of delicate Oak Fern (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*) grew beside the path.

We retraced our steps thereafter, pausing only for welcome refreshment in Grange: Borrowdale had done us proud despite the early disappointment.

David Clarke, Stephen Hewitt & Jeremy Roberts

Notes & Records

Potential addition of White-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaethon lepturus* Daudin) to the list of British birds

On the evening of 6 January 2013 I called at the house of taxidermist Peter Scott on the outskirts of Workington. Peter had just returned home from walking his dogs on the beach at Mawbray Bank, where he had found an unusual tern-like bird dead on the strandline. Since the corpse was too rotten to be preserved Peter had simply plucked the two distinctive, long, central tail-feathers by which to identify the species. He was on the point of consulting his reference books when I happened to arrive. From Peter’s description and the distinctive tail streamers, we quickly established that the bird was likely to be a tropicbird! Apparently, the only tropicbird previously recorded in British waters is the Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*) which was added to the British list following a sighting off the Scilly Isles in 2001. I was therefore very keen to obtain the carcass, both to identify the species concerned and to preserve it as far as possible as a voucher specimen of this extraordinary occurrence on the Cumbrian coast. Peter generously agreed to return with me to Mawbray to try and recover the body

before the next tide might carry it off. Fortunately the bird had washed up fairly close to the beach car park at Mawbray and even in the dark Peter was able to quickly locate the specimen.

It was not possible to examine the body very closely in the dark and beyond establishing that it did indeed appear to be a largely intact and extremely smelly tropicbird, I simply bagged it for transport and later study. Even double -bagged the stench in the car on my way home was as bad as any I have encountered in my fairly extensive experience of decaying wildlife. The next day I took the specimen into the Museum and photographed it on the gravel in the Tullie House garden, having first arranged the plucked tail feathers in their correct position. Although the carcass had shed some feathers the distinctive plumage of the bird was still obvious and it was readily identifiable as an adult White-tailed Tropicbird.

This beautiful and charismatic species has a broad range, occurring across much of the tropical oceans, including the southern Indian, western and central Pacific, and south Atlantic oceans. A pelagic species, White-tailed Tropicbirds nest on small oceanic islands. The nearest breeding colonies to Britain are on Caribbean islands and Bermuda.

There are only three (or possibly just two) accepted records of the species in the Western Palearctic to date. The first was an adult on the Cape Verde Islands in February 1999. The next one was another adult seen in the Azores for two weeks in October 2011. What was thought to be the same bird re-appeared in March 2012 and an adult (perhaps the same bird again) was seen on Faial in the Azores in the autumn of 2012.

The details of the Mawbray find and photographs of the specimen were relayed to Stephen Westerberg, the County Bird Recorder, and were submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC), the official adjudicator of rare bird records in Britain, in January 2013. The Committee is still considering the submission. However, in order to add to the British list the Committee will need to satisfy itself that the bird made it to British waters under its own steam and did not die beyond the limit of British waters and get carried here by ocean currents or indeed by ship, having perhaps landed or crashed onboard in tropical seas and thence been transported to British waters before being washed overboard. Since there seems no way of establishing the facts of this case one way or the other, it seems very unlikely that White-tailed Tropicbird will be added to the British list on the strength of this strandline corpse.

For the present, the specimen remains in the freezer at Tullie House Museum and will be preserved as best it can be in due course.

Stephen Hewitt, Tullie House Museum, Carlisle

Rearing of Capercaillie and other game-birds at Netherby, Cumberland, 1926-31

Whilst checking through some correspondence of Ernest Blezard among archive papers from Derek Ratcliffe, recently deposited at Tullie House Museum by his widow Jeannette Ratcliffe, we came across two handwritten 'Notes by Tom L. Johnston' describing attempts to rear Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* and Capercaillie *T. urogallus* on Sir Richard Graham's estate at Netherby, near Longtown. An earlier attempt to introduce Capercaillie had been made by Sir Richard's father, Sir Frederick Graham, in the 19th century (Macpherson, 1892) but this more recent attempt is not mentioned in any of the subsequent summaries of the status of birds in the Lake Counties. In view of this, it seems worth making Johnston's notes more widely available. Unfortunately neither is dated, but they must have been initially written between 1931, the latest date they refer to, and 1948, the year Johnston died (Blezard, 1954). However, these notes appear to be in the hand of E. Blezard and so could have been transcribed at a later date. They read as follows:

Note 1. Rearing of Red Grouse at Netherby by William Bell and his son Andrew Bell.

In 1926 duck breeding almost ceased except for Garganey, William Bell having his time fully occupied in a new venture, grouse rearing. The eggs were obtained from nests on Solway Moss and from several cut-winged birds which had been caught in traps during the past winter. The grouse pairs were on the edge of the moss where plenty of young, fresh heather was growing. Some of them were fairly large, several acres in extent and surrounded by a wire fence five feet high.

The cut-winged birds were put in these pens and were practically in a wild state, their nests being almost as difficult to find as in the regular breeding ground. The heavy domestic hens were too big and clumsy for the small eggs of grouse so Bell got a lot of half-bred Bantam Silky birds which made perfect foster-mothers.

Grouse eggs hatched out well and many young were reared. In 1927 about fifty birds were hatched out. In 1928 Bell had about 150 eggs and in the hatching of the first 45, only three eggs were infertile.

In June, the pens were visited by a brood of Weasels which killed eleven chicks. The following week Stoats found them out and about 50 birds were lost before the birds were shifted to new pens on the edge of the moss.

Note 2. Rearing of Red Grouse, Black Grouse and Capercaillie at Netherby.

Some greyhens hatched out well – 8 out of 8, 6 out of 8 and 9 out of 10 – the last lot being from penned birds but by 15 July only six of them were alive.

Young grouse are very easy to rear and when almost fully feathered are very perky little chaps, especially the cocks. When you are walking in the pens, they will fly or run towards you nipping you on the leg and hanging on to the stocking. The more advanced birds fly on to your shoulder, calling repeatedly all the time.

These birds used to be liberated on the North Cumberland moors in Bewcastle and on one occasion they recognised Bell, after a lapse of two years, when he called to them.

8 June 1929. Bell has some Capercaillie eggs from Strathdon, c/7 which had gone bad, also c/10 which hatched out four birds, the others having died during the journey, the eggs chipping and the chicks unable to get fresh air. Another c/7 were fresh eggs.

3 May 1930. Andy Bell has found a few nests during the week for the new grouse pens.

17 May 1930. The grouse nests in Solway Moss have poor clutches this season, 5 and 6 being the average while the Stilshaw clutches which are sent to Bell were two of twelve eggs and one of eleven.

7 June 1930. Bell had three sittings of Capercaillie sent from Strathdon, one lot hatching out on the journey.

12 July. Bell has six young Greyhens but all the Capercaillies have died.

1930. New grouse pens were erected on the moss edge with Andrew Bell in full charge. In 1931 he hatched 106 out of 107 eggs.

T. L. Johnston is known to have had an interest in the birds of Netherby and was a fairly frequent visitor there in the 1920s. Furthermore in 1943 he published with Ernest Blezard a short piece in the Society's Transactions about the rearing of ducks at Netherby (Blezard & Johnston, 1943).

It is clear from these notes that Sir Richard Graham's attempt to introduce Capercaillie was rather half-hearted and ultimately a failure, just as his father's bid to do the same several decades earlier had been (and as was a third introduction at Grizedale in the late 1960s and early 1970s – see Grant & Cubby, 1973). Both were probably doomed anyway because of a failure to take fully into account the bird's ecological needs. The attempts to breed Red and Black Grouse seem to have been more successful though whether the releases on the Bewcastle Fells did anything to help the species' fortunes there is difficult to tell. Certainly both have declined in Cumbria in the past half a century, though each still maintains a toe-hold in the far north-east of the county (Stott, *et al.*, 2002).

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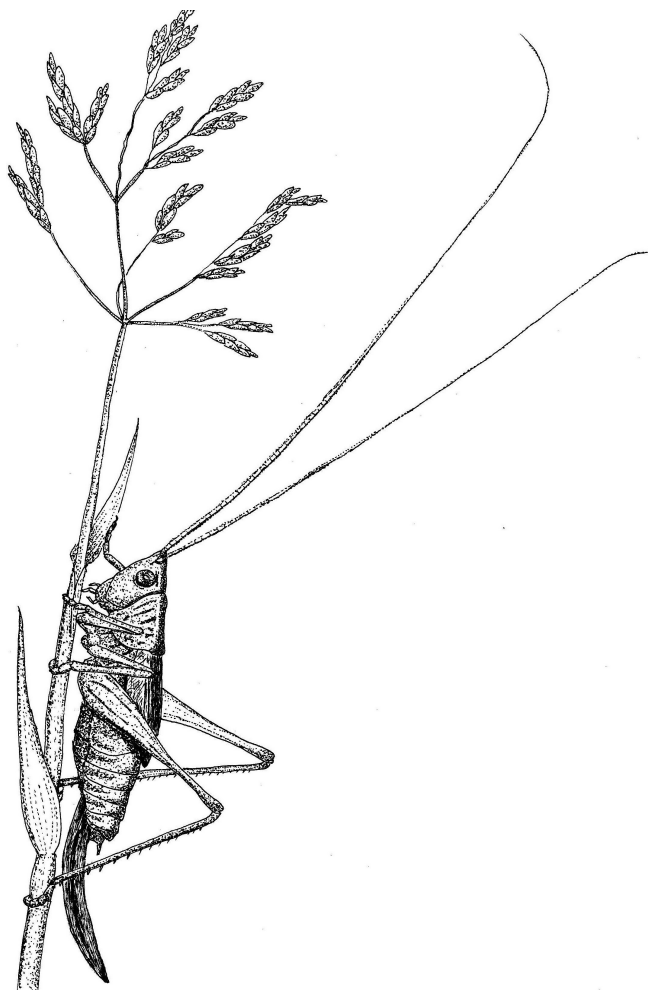
Robin M. Sellers, Crag House, Ellerslie Park, Gosforth, Cumbria, CA20 1BL
Stephen Hewitt, Tullie House Museum, Castle Street, Carlisle, CA3 8TP

Continued range-expansion of the Short-winged Cone-head (*Conocephalus dorsalis* (Latreille)) in Cumbria

The Short-winged Cone-head is a bush-cricket that has been spreading steadily northwards along the west coast. It was first reported from Cumbria at Humphrey Head in 2006 (Newton, 2006). Since moving to Bolton le Sands (just south of Carnforth, North Lancashire) in 2012, we have been recording it regularly around this part of Morecambe Bay where it is easy to record using a bat detector. It occurs right around the Bay in suitable habitat.

It prefers tall vegetation in the upper part of salt-marshes or along estuaries (common on the banks of the Lune up to Lancaster), often amongst stands of *Spartina*, *Juncus* or *Scirpus*. It also extends along tidal ditches at Bolton le Sands for around 150 metres inland. In this habitat, it lives among Reeds (*Phragmites australis*). The populations are quite large. Our estimates for the Bolton le Sands saltmarsh is over 200 stridulating insects.

However, in heavily-grazed saltmarsh it is absent. An example of this is the extensive saltmarsh between Arnside and Storth on the Kent estuary, where we found none in July/August 2013. This area has absolutely no stands of taller vegetation, being very heavily grazed by sheep.



Short-winged Cone-head (Stephen Hewitt)

After examining the NBN Gateway online the most northerly records appear to be from the south side of the Duddon estuary. On 8 August 2013 we cycled along this coast to search for further colonies. We heard around five stridulating cone-heads in the saltmarsh on the north side of the River Mite at Ravenglass, next to the seaward side of the railway (SD082967). We then searched further north, including extensive areas of apparently ideal habitat on the River Irt estuary south of Drigg, but found none. We also drew blanks further north around the mouths of the Calder and Ehen.

This is a northwards extension of its range from the Duddon estuary. It will be interesting to look for it further north in future years.

Reference

Newton, J. (2006) Short-winged Cone-head (*Conocephalus dorsalis* (Latreille)) new to Cumbria. *Carlisle Naturalist*, **14** (2). 35-37.

Steve & Belinda Garland, 6 Main Road, Bolton le Sands, Carnforth LA5 8DH

A Cumbrian site for both Banded and Beautiful Demoiselle damselflies (*Calopteryx* spp.)

These two species normally have slightly differing habitat preference, the Beautiful Demoiselle (*C. virgo*) preferring the relatively fast-moving water of smaller streams, the Banded (*C. splendens*) usually selecting slower-moving water, typical of mature lowland rivers. Sites holding both species in close association occur in some parts of the country where their ranges and habitats overlap sufficiently, but the limited occurrence of these species in Cumbria narrows the chance of finding of such coincidences. The only site that I am aware of in the county first came to my attention in 2010, when Ronnie Irving recorded

the presence of both species at Pinfold Hill bridge near The Howe in the Lyth valley (SD463884). His visits in subsequent years produced similar results. When I visited on 16 July 2013, both species were again present. The continuity of records seems to suggest that this is an established situation, and that the site has localised water flow-rates that meet both species' requirements. The watercourse is a canalised stream that flows south towards the R Gilpin. It is part of the system managed by the Environment Agency, with a pumping station on the upstream side of the bridge. The canalised section north of the bridge has a long slow-moving stretch with floating leaves of *Potamogeton*; near the bridge and the pumping station there are signs of slightly faster water movement. There is a degree of tree shade too at this point (to which *C. virgo* is the more tolerant). The maintained banks have good fringes of Reed-canary Grass (*Phalaris*) at the water's edge. On the date of my visit at least two males of *C. splendens* were near the bridge interacting with those of *C. virgo*: males of the latter were more abundant and it was always they that initiated male-to-male interactions, both between the two species and within their own. The presence of *C. splendens* here reflects increasing records in the south of the county, presumably through colonisation from further south.

David Clarke, Burnfoot, Cumwhitton, Brampton, CA8 9EX

The slime mould *Fuligo septica* var. *flava* (L.) and the beetle *Anisotoma humeralis* (Fabricius) in Grizedale Forest

Ing (1999) states: '*Fuligo septica* var. *flava* is one of the commonest and most familiar of all British and Irish myxomycetes, often looking like scrambled egg spilt on a log.' That is exactly how I saw it in Grizedale Forest on 27 August 2013 (plate 4). Whilst it may be very common nationally, both the NBN Gateway map for the species and the atlas provided by Ing (1982) have fewer records for the north-west of England than for the south-east.

This particular part of the forest clothes steeply sloping ground and consists largely of quite mature oak trees, some fallen and supporting a wide range of fungi and bryophytes. It is known as Scale Green Intake (SD3281.9303). The two examples of *Fuligo* were on the upper surface of a moss-covered fallen oak and I could see no more in the immediate area. When I touched the yellow part, it had a rather wet and slimy feel but I was able to lift the whole organism intact from the moss upon which it rested. It left no sign of having been present on the mossy trunk. Each patch was roughly circular in shape and the yellow central part about 7 cm in diameter with a white slimy layer beneath them. I was able to make a tentative identification from a photograph in Sterry & Hughes (2009) before confirmation by Geraldine Reid.

The discovery encouraged me to try to find out more about these organisms. Opinions seem to differ about the exact classification of the group. Until comparatively recently, myxomycetes were regarded as somewhat unusual fungi; today they are regarded as nearer to the protozoans. Their life cycle includes a single-celled amoeboid stage during which the organism is free-living and feeds by ingesting other minute organisms such as bacteria. Under suitable conditions these may coalesce into a fungus-like plasmodium stage, often quite large, known as an aethalium, the stage at which *F. septica* is so noticeable, whilst the slimy white layer upon which the aethalium sits and can also form a white margin around it is known as the hypothallus. At this stage the slime mould is able to move slowly, oozing over its feeding substrate, though it seldom survives for more than a day or so in this form.

In a crevice on the surface of the smaller of the two patches there was a small beetle [length 3-4 mm] and I found three more on the moss beneath the larger. All four were *Anisotoma humeralis*, a species that belongs to the family Leiodidae and is typically found in fungi and fungoid wood (plate 4, inset). Cooter (1991) states that the beetle is 'widespread and often found in numbers in and about myxomycete sporophores'. There are relatively few records for the species in Cumbria; David Atty kindly sent me details of all those of which he is aware and they are generally quite well spread throughout the lowland parts of the county and usually for single specimens, with only one occurrence of the beetle in a fairly large number (in fungi on a tree near Ouse Bridge, at the northern end of Bassenthwaite Lake, on 4 July 1999). The fact that specimens have been noted in flight at dusk, inside a property early in the morning and in what would appear to be totally unsuitable conditions on Drigg dunes suggests that the species is well adapted to fly quite considerable distances in search of suitable fungi. Though the beetles may cause some damage to the slime mould, this could be more than offset by the dispersal of its spores.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Stephen Hewitt of Tullie House Museum and Steven Judd of the National Museum of Liverpool for their advice and also to Geraldine Reid, Head of Botany and Curator of Non-flowering Plant Science at the National Museum of Liverpool, for identifying the organism, and to David Atty for sharing his experience of the beetles.

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James R. A. Thomas, Bridge House, Borwick, Carnforth, Lancs LA6 1JU

A record of the horsehair worm *Gordius villoti* Rosa, 1882 from Cumbria

On 12 September 2013 on Whitbarrow Scar, we came across a water-filled tractor rut in which about twenty long thin worms were swimming rather slowly and coiling round each other. I kept one to try and identify it: it was approximately 17 cm in length and 0.5 mm in width and quite 'wiry' (see plate 5). The rut that they were in was about 20 m in length, 0.5 m in width, with a muddy bottom and a maximum depth of 20 cm, obviously temporary in nature and completely lacking in vegetation. It was in a muddy open ride, surrounded by trees at SD45243.86513.

I sent the specimen to the Natural History Museum in London, where Eileen Harris, Senior Curator of the Parasites and Vectors Division, kindly confirmed that it was a horsehair worm or gordiid, a member of the minor phylum Nematomorpha – which has only a few hundred species worldwide: it was a male *Gordius villoti*. There is no record of the species on the Cumbria county database but I did find an early record for Westmorland with no exact data (Bayliss, 1944).

Information on this group of organisms is fairly sparse but it appears that the adult stage, which we encountered, does not feed. After mating, the females lay eggs in sticky jelly on aquatic vegetation and when they hatch each larva somehow enters an aquatic insect such as a dragonfly nymph and feeds on its body fluids. In one way or another, the larva next enters a terrestrial insect such as a beetle or grasshopper and there is some evidence that once the larva has completed its development and is ready to emerge, it can impel the normally terrestrial host to seek water where its life cycle starts again.

Though obviously dated, the paper by Bayliss makes interesting reading, whilst further (sparse) information can be found on the Field Studies Council website. Thanks are due to Eileen Harris for identifying the specimen.

Reference

Bayliss, H.A. (1944) Notes on the Distribution of Hairworms (Nematomorpha:

Gordiidae) in the British Isles. *Journal of Zoology: Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, Vol. B113, Issue 4: 193 – 197.

James R. A. Thomas, Bridge House, Borwick, Carnforth, Lancs, LA6 1JU

[Though quite different anatomically to the hugely abundant nematode worms (phylum Nematoda), being non-segmented, horsehair worms resemble these in general appearance. The segmented earthworms and their many relatives occupy yet another phylum (Annelida): the term ‘worm’ is a general descriptor, not evidence of relationship! Ed.]

Close occurrence of the two species of elf-cup fungi (*Sarcoscypha* spp.) at Great Wood, Keswick

In the 2012/13 survey of the two red elf-cup species (*Lakeland Naturalist* 1(1): pp. 23-26), only the commoner species, *S. austriaca*, was recorded from Great Wood. By chance in March 2014, I collected a specimen for identification and concluded it was *S. coccinea*, much the scarcer of this species-pair. I provided Paul Nichol with material from this location (NY27160.21165) and he confirmed the identification, which is a new hectad for this species. At the same time he checked a second collection I had made about 100 metres away in the same habitat (NY27100.21050). This proved to be the other species, *S. austriaca*. (It is likely that the 2013 material was from neither of these two precise find-spots, though obviously close to both.) Including Great Wood, there are now at least three known sites in the county where these two species occupy virtually the same ground. The present example is an eloquent testimony to the value of high resolution grid references and/or on-the-ground location notes. It would be interesting to know whether these are stable situations, or whether they are instances of the commoner species advancing and possibly even replacing the rarer one. Where both do occur so closely, *S. coccinea* certainly appears to be the less abundant of the two.

David Clarke, Burnfoot, Cumwhitton, Brampton, CA8 9EX

Subspecific identity of Snow Buntings wintering in Cumbria

Robin M. Sellers

Crag House, Ellerslie Park, Gosforth, Cumbria CA20 1BL

Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis* (Linnaeus)) are regular winter visitors to Britain. They are most numerous in Shetland, Orkney, the Cairngorms and along the east coast of Britain from Caithness in the north to Kent in the south (Lack, 1986; Balmer *et al.*, 2013). They are much less common on the west side of Britain and, though they occur annually in Cumbria, numbers are generally small. Until the mid-1980s the birds wintering in Britain were thought to originate primarily from Scandinavia but, following renewed interest in the species at about this time, it became clear that in fact the majority were from Iceland (*e.g.* Banks *et al.*, 1991). This was based partly on ringing recoveries but most importantly on the birds' plumage which reflects the different subspecies involved – those from Iceland being birds of the subspecies *P. n. insulae* and are darker in colour than Scandinavian birds which are of the nominate subspecies *P. n. nivalis*. The only indication of which subspecies the birds wintering in Cumbria belong to is that contained in Blezard *et al.*, 1943, in which only nominate *nivalis* is mentioned. Given recent experience elsewhere it seemed of interest to look again at the subspecific identity of the birds occurring in Cumbria and this article summarises the findings of such an investigation.

Distinguishing between the two forms of the Snow Bunting is relatively straightforward but depends crucially on the birds being correctly sexed. Fortunately reliable and easy-to-use techniques for distinguishing between males and females became available in the late 1980s (Rae & Marquiss, 1989) and depend on the colour of the underside of the main flight feathers. In males the outer portions of the primaries and secondaries look as if they have been dipped in Indian ink and appear black with a clear demarcation between the outer portion of these feathers and the greyish-white inner portions. In females the outer part of these feathers is typically light to medium grey with no very distinct boundary with the inner, somewhat paler parts. Identification of the subspecies relies on the colour of the rump in males (white, often with the feathers being tipped ginger to rusty brown, in *nivalis*, and black in *insulae*) and on the amount of black on the visible portion of primary 9 (primaries numbered ascendently) – at least 60% black in *insulae*, but $\leq 40\%$ black in *nivalis* (further details in Banks *et al.*, 1990). Age is an additional source of variation in plumage coloration and it is helpful if this is also assessed. This was done principally on the basis of the amount of white on the longest feather of the primary coverts but also on the colour of the outer

greater coverts (Banks *et al.*, 1990).

The material available for study comprised six Snow Bunting skins all taken in Cumbria and now in Tullie House Museum, Carlisle. The principal features of the plumages of these birds are summarised in Appendix. A report (Sellers, 2011) providing more detailed descriptions of these six skins together with biometric data and some photographs has been lodged with Tullie House Museum and is also available on request from the author.

Sexing Snow Buntings in the hand using the criteria described by Rae & Marquiss (1989) is usually straightforward and none of the six skins examined proved difficult in this respect. The criteria used before the publication of Rae & Marquiss's method (the colour of the scapulars, lesser coverts and median coverts) are more subjective and prone to error, and this, perhaps coupled with a failure to appreciate that two subspecies were likely to be present, may account for the mis-sexing of one of the specimens (a second specimen, skin ref: 76-1957.17, of unknown provenance, bears a label giving the sex as male, though on plumage grounds it is clearly a female); similar discrepancies exist in the Snow Bunting skins in the British Museum (Natural History) collection (RMS, unpublished data) and have been reported in collections in the Netherlands (Jukema, 2005).

Given the correct determination of the sex, then assignment of the subspecies is straightforward in males. Females can be slightly more difficult because there is a small amount of overlap between the two in the key feature, the amount of black on primary 9. Two of the three females examined (birds 2 and 5 in Appendix) were clear cut in this respect; the third (bird 4) was only just outside the overlap zone, but formally the amount of black it had on P9 fell in the range of values typical of *P. n. nivalis*. Overall, of the six skins examined, three were identified as being of the nominate subspecies *P. n. nivalis* (two females and a male) and three of the Icelandic subspecies *P. n. insulae* (one female and two males). In addition two photographs of live birds were examined and both were identified as males of the nominate subspecies *P. n. nivalis* (further details are given in Sellers, 2011).

This investigation shows unequivocally that both the Scandinavian (subspecies *nivalis*) and Icelandic (subspecies *insulae*) forms of the Snow Bunting have occurred in Cumbria, a conclusion reinforced by the fact that birds of both sexes of both subspecies are involved and that the criterion for distinguishing between the subspecies in males is completely different from that in females.

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to Stephen Hewitt and Tullie House Museum, Carlisle for allowing me to consult the skins in the Tullie House collection.

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Appendix

Plumage descriptions and diagnoses of skins in the collections at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle:

1: Skin no. 24-1984.47 (label gives sex as male)

Collected: Anthorn, Cumberland, 8 November 1920.

Underwing: Underside of primaries jet black with distinct demarcation between black outer parts of feathers and white inner ones (= male).

Primary coverts: Longest feather all white (= adult).

Rump: White overlain with some gingery brown feathers and a few slightly darker ones (= *P. n. nivalis*).

Diagnosis: adult male *P. n. nivalis*.

2: Skin no. 24-1984.48 (label gives sex as female)

Collected: Rockcliffe Marsh, Cumberland, 31 January 1906.

Underwing: Outer portion of underside of primaries silvery grey with no clear demarcation between this area and inner whitish part of feathers (= female).

Primary coverts: Longest feather almost wholly black with just a very narrow white edge (= first-year).

Primary 9: Visible portion of feather 100% black (= *P. n. insulae*).

Diagnosis: first-year female *P. n. insulae*.

3: Skin no. 24-1984.49 (label gives sex as male)

Collected: Burgh-by-Sands, Cumberland, 7 November 1901.

Underwing: Underside of primaries jet black with distinct demarcation between black outer portion of feathers and white inner part (= male).

Primary coverts: Longest feather all white (= adult).

Rump: Dark brown feathers overlying black feathers; a few white feathers on outer edges of rump (= *P. n. insulae*).

Diagnosis: adult male *P. n. insulae*.

4: Skin no. 34-1925.5 (label gives sex as male)

Collected: Skinburness, Cumberland, 14 October 1892.

Underwing: Outer portion of underside of primaries dark silvery grey with no clear demarcation between this area and the whitish inner part of these feathers (= female).

Primary coverts: Longest feather black, narrowly edged white (= first-year).

Primary 9: Length of black portion of P9 17 mm, total length of visible portion 43 mm; thus black represents 39.5% of visible portion of feather (= *P. n. nivalis*)

Diagnosis: first-year female *P. n. nivalis*.

5: Skin no. 36-1984.17

Collected: Silloth, Cumberland, 11 December 1884.

Underwing: Outer portion of underside of primaries silvery grey with no clear demarcation between this area and the whitish inner part of these feathers (= female).

Primary coverts: Longest feather mostly dark brown and black on inner web, with small white tip, *ca.*2 mm wide; outer web almost wholly white (= first-year).

Primary 9: Length of black portion of P9 14mm, total length of visible portion 41 mm; thus black represents 34% of visible portion of feather (= *P. n. nivalis*)

Diagnosis: first-year female *P. n. nivalis*.

6: Skin no. 36-1984.18

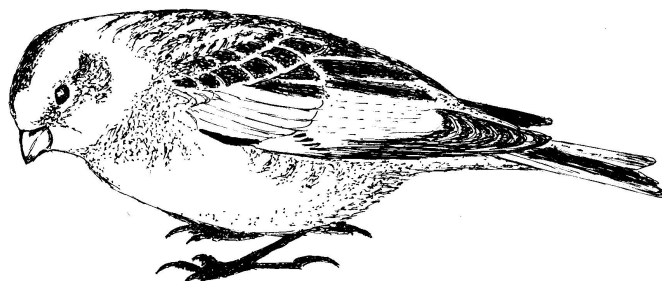
Collected: Silloth, Cumberland, 11 December 1884.

Underwing: Underside of primaries jet black with distinct demarcation between black outer portion of primaries and smaller white, inner part (= male).

Primary coverts: Longest feather almost wholly black (= first-year).

Rump: Dark brown and black feathers overlying black feathers; a few white feathers at either side of rump (= *P. n. insulae*).

Diagnosis: first-year male *P. n. insulae*.



(David Clarke)

The montane race of Crowberry
Empetrum nigrum* ssp. *hermaphroditum (Hagerup) Böcher
in the north Pennines

Jeremy Roberts

Eden Croft, 2 Wetheral Pasture, Carlisle CA4 8HU

The Crowberry, *Empetrum*, exists in two forms in UK, regarded previously as distinct species and currently as races: the common plant *E. nigrum* subspecies *nigrum*, and the more local and montane *E. nigrum* ssp. *hermaphroditum* (see, e.g., Stace, 2010). The latter, although frequent at higher altitudes in the Scottish Highlands, is very localised in the Scottish Borders, in Lakeland, and in Snowdonia (Preston, *et al.*, 2002).

Although there have been records from the north Pennines – in the Cross Fell area (tetrad NY68.34, R.E. Groom) and Knock Fell (tetrads NY72.30; 74.28; 74.30, A.J. Richards) – these records are regarded by Halliday (1997) as ‘unconfirmed’ in the absence of specimens. It is probably this doubt that left the distribution map of ssp. *hermaphroditum* with no ‘dots’ for the north Pennines in Preston *et al.*, *op. cit.*

These two plants are certainly distinct forms, having different ploidy levels – ssp. *nigrum* being diploid (i.e. having the ‘basal’ sets of chromosomes, $2n=26$), and ssp. *hermaphroditum* tetraploid (with a doubled set, $2n=52$). However, their separation purely on morphological characters is somewhat vexed, and perhaps not always as clearcut as the reference works might suggest (Bell & Tallis, 1973; Freeman *et al.*, 1980; McVean & Berrie, 1952; Murray *et al.*, 2009). The flowers in ssp. *hermaphroditum* are indeed hermaphrodite (bisexual): thus three stamens can (with perseverance) be seen emerging from below the ovary in the flowers, and as the berries develop a few withered stamens usually remain – best seen by examining the bases of carefully picked berries. Bushes of subspecies *nigrum* are dioecious (either male or female), and close examination of the flower may reveal either (in male plants) stamens but no functional ovary (and hence no developing berry later in the season), or (in female plants) a developing berry with no stamens.

However, the occasional presence of hermaphrodite plants of ssp. *nigrum* has been confirmed by chromosome counts in England (Edmondbyers, v.c. 66) (Blackburn, 1938) so that this character alone is inadequate for separation. Another character is provided by the length vs. width of leaves, those of ssp. *hermaphroditum* being typically shorter and broader (according to Stace (2010), length/width ratio = 2-4), and with more clearly curved margins, than those of ssp. *nigrum* (length/width

ratio = 3-5), with leaves more nearly parallel-sided).

There are other less well-defined characters. Subspecies *hermaphroditum* tends to form a more erect – bushy – and less sprawling plant, but in fact ssp. *nigrum* will mimic this growth form when growing in rocky ground and on cliffs, the typical habitat of ssp. *hermaphroditum*. Subspecies *nigrum*'s young shoots are often strongly tinged red.

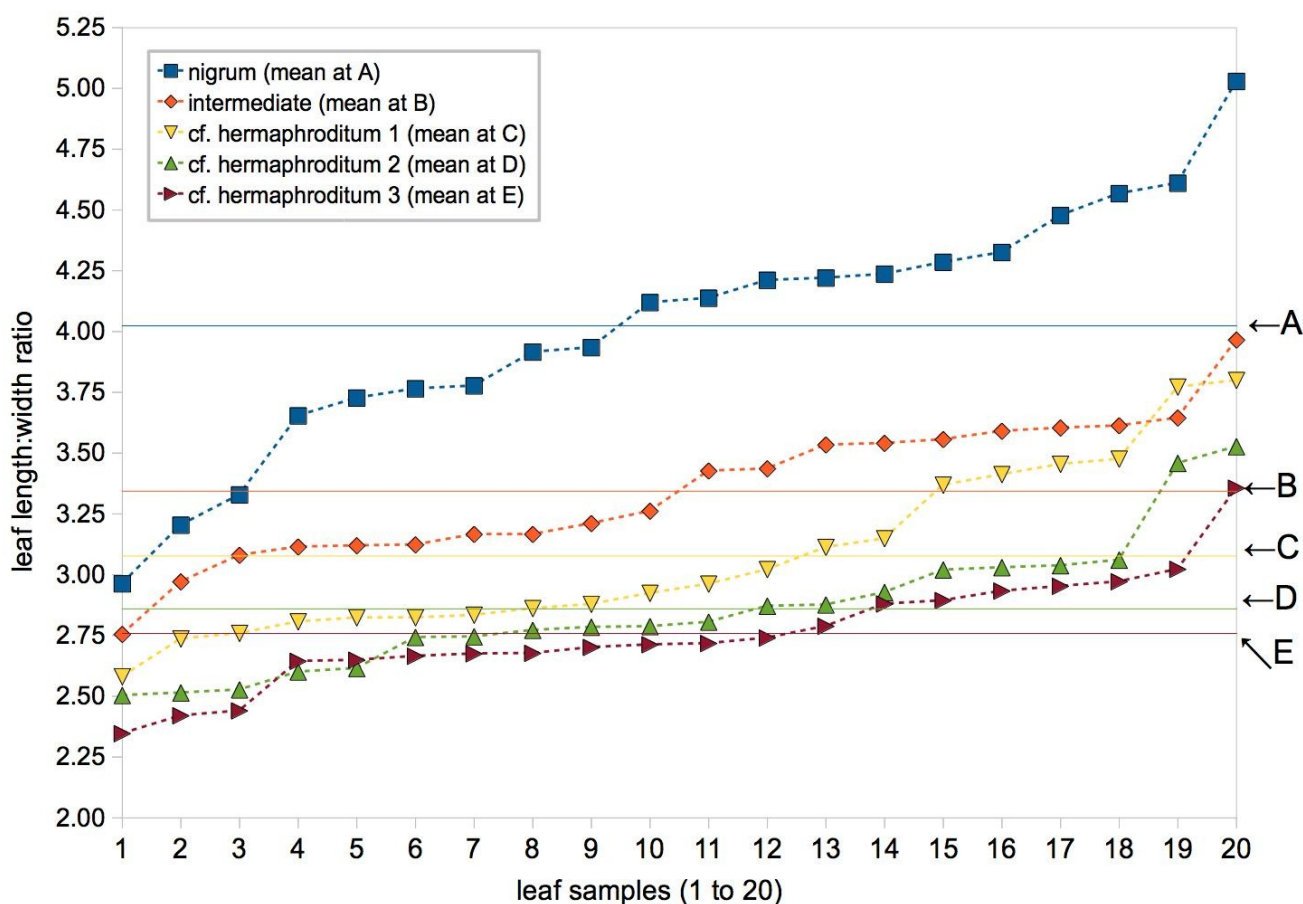
Whilst searching the large areas of gritstone scree above Knock Ore Gill between Great Dun Fell and Knock Fell some years ago, Dr Rod Corner pointed out to me that in late summer the following year's buds are already developed. (See Rich & Jermy, 1998.) Shoots from several crowberry bushes on the screes were examined at home, and on dissection of some flower buds in one sample the presence of immature anthers around the ovary could be clearly seen – a character of ssp. *hermaphroditum*.

A few distinctly desultory searches over the years since had revealed how few crowberry bushes there actually were on those screes, and none had been found fruiting until 1 July 2013, when I had a careful search over the largest area of scree, just above the Knock Ore Gill, and below the track to the Silverband Mine, at NY712307/NY713307.

Just nine scattered crowberry bushes were found, and a few shoots were collected from each. Most of the bushes seemed to be entirely sterile (*i.e.* no sign was evident of any flowers having been produced in 2013). Only three bushes had developing berries, and all three of these had anthers around the berries, indicative of ssp. *hermaphroditum* (see plate 6). Whilst the shoots were still fresh (as the leaves shrivel with remarkable speed when picked!) I measured the length and width of a sample of 20 leaves from each bush. (It is not clear from the literature whether 'leaf length' refers to the whole leaf including petiole, or to the leaf-lamina alone. The short (*c.* 0.5 mm) petiole was included in the length measurements in this exercise.)

Results

The leaf length/width ratios from twenty leaves from each of the three hermaphrodite samples, one example of subspecies *nigrum*, and an intermediate (discussed below) were plotted (see right; the ratios ranked from lowest to highest within each set). The means for each set, A to E, are indicated.



Discussion

The leaf length/width ratios and standard deviation (s.d.) from each of the three hermaphrodite samples, one example of subspecies *nigrum*, and the intermediate, can be summarised as follows:

	leaf length/width ratio	s.d. (n=20)
subspecies <i>nigrum</i> (A, above)	4.02	0.50
intermediate (B)	3.34	0.29
putative ssp. <i>hermaphroditum</i> 1 (C)	3.08	0.35
putative ssp. <i>hermaphroditum</i> 2 (D)	2.76	0.23
putative ssp. <i>hermaphroditum</i> 3 (E)	2.86	0.28

The combination in three bushes of the characters of i) hermaphrodite flowers and ii) a leaf length/width ratio close to three suggests these are indeed subspecies *hermaphroditum*.

As so often in botany, one plant proved impossible to place. No flowers nor berries could be found, and so its identity cannot be confirmed at present. The leaf length/width ratio was 3.34 (s.d. = 0.29; n = 20), placing it rather inconveniently between the two forms. It could well represent an extreme variation in one form or another. It is always tempting in these circumstances to ponder possible hybridity, but the evidence is too sparse for this avenue to be explored. The hybrid appears to be currently unknown in UK (Preston, C.D., pers. comm.), although it is well-known from both the Scandinavian and Central European mountain ranges (www.ibot.cas.cz/fcm/biosyst.html; Suda *et al.*, 2010). Little progress can be made with this puzzle, without refinding of the original bush – no straightforward task – and its propagation in cultivation for a chromosome count.

Conclusions

Although lacking the certainty which chromosome counts would provide, the morphological data presented here suggest that the subspecies *hermaphroditum* of *Empetrum nigrum* does occur in the North Pennines.

Efforts should be made to locate more bushes on the extensive gritstone screes along the Cross Fell escarpment, and any flowering or fruiting bushes of putative ssp. *hermaphroditum* sampled. A problem with further studies on this interesting population, however, is that several of these bushes are on sections of unstable block-scrée, parts of which are loose, and potentially dangerous.

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Notes on the bryophilous fungus

***Chromocyphella muscicola* (Fr.) Donk in Cumbria**

David Clarke

Burnfoot, Cumwhitton, Brampton, Cumbria CA8 9EX

The basidiomycete fungus *Chromocyphella muscicola* has been recorded widely over the UK (from some 30 vice-counties), ranging from the far south (e.g. New Forest) to northern Scotland and western Ireland. Nonetheless, there are only 66 records (19th century to 2014) in the British Mycological Society's online database* and only about half this number as yet appear on the National Biodiversity Network's maps. Records indicate a westerly trend. In Cumbria its status remains uncertain, with the only records being, apparently, those detailed below. More widely, the species appears to be restricted to the more oceanic areas of northern/western Europe. Fruiting occurs mainly in the winter.

I have now found *Chromocyphella* at six locations in the county – and in both v.c. 69 and v.c.70. The first of these, Raven Beck woods near Outhwaite, (NY64) was reported in Clarke (2008). In winter 2012/13 I found it in Naddle Forest, Mardale (NY51); Argill CWT NR (NY81), and at Blacklyne Bridge (NY47). Further searches in winter 2013/14 revealed the presence of fruit bodies at Park Wood, Bassenthwaite (NY23), Aira Beck (NY42), and in the Lyne valley at Shank Wood (NY46). (The quality of the Lyne Woodlands SSSI strongly suggests the species may be present more widely there.) At the Mardale and Aira Beck locations – especially on old Hazels – the species was present on many trees, though not always easy to locate.

Fruit bodies (basidiomes) have been found on bryophytes on near-vertical or horizontal limbs of smooth-barked trees, usually at or above head height. Although Hazel was the most frequent, I also found the fungus on moss on Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). The bryophyte hosts were usually *Hypnum cupressiforme*/*H. andoi*. (Even where a liverwort *Metzgeria* sp. was present as well, the fruit bodies seemed clearly attached to the moss.) All locations were in humid sites and in the shelter of old-growth woodland.

Chromocyphella fruiting bodies (plate 7) are whitish, sessile 'bells', up to about 5mm across, with a felty surface, appearing rather like woolly bonnets when seen close up. The gill-less spore-bearing surface becomes pinkish-brown on maturity. Despite small size, they can stand out against the dark colours of mosses and bark. N.W. Legon (in FRDBI*) mentions that 'circular patches' of dead moss on tree trunks can indicate the species' presence, a potentially useful pointer in the

absence of fruiting. Though delicate-looking, the fruit bodies must be tolerant of low temperatures and desiccating conditions.

Prompted by images on Dutch websites, I was especially interested to see whether signs of presence – as also mentioned by Legon (above) – were recognisable as such before the fruit bodies appeared, making it possible to predict where these would later be found. The website images showed more or less complete rings of dead moss a few centimetres wide and up to 15-20 centimetres in diameter on the main trunks of deciduous trees. Some images even showed concentric double rings. Within the rings there was sometimes exposed bark, and live/green moss bearing *Chromocyphella* fruit bodies, often in abundance. This seems highly indicative of a parasitic trophic mode. (The situation is however almost the inverse of what happens with the familiar grassland ‘fairy rings’, where the fruiting normally occurs at the *edge* of an expanding ring of mycelium.) The nature of this phenomenon seemingly requires further research, as does the age of the rings. Stip Helleman (pers. comm.) has found the species on American Oak (*Quercus rubra*) and other smooth-barked trees, including *Salix* and *Acer* spp. in Holland. Other recorded tree and shrub hosts [in FRDBI] include *Quercus petraea*, *Fagus*, *Tilia*, *Fraxinus*, *Picea*, *Laurus* and *Lonicera*.

At Naddle Forest, I earmarked a partial ring of yellowing moss on 1 August 2013; in damper conditions on 15 October it was still present, and there were already some developing fruit bodies present. In March 2014 I searched again and found two more trees bearing mature, though small, basidiomes. At most sites where I have found the species, the host is Hazel, with relatively small diameter limbs (*ca.* 10-20 cm). For this reason the ring formations referred to above may simply be unable to develop, or perhaps only in incomplete or very distorted form. At Aira Beck, I found one apparent example of a fairly complete (though probably senescent) ring on a vertical limb of a beck-side Sycamore. Plate 8 shows this, together with a ‘classic’ example (at web resolution) of a Dutch situation mentioned above. It seems that examples equivalent to those in Holland have not been observed in the UK. In the absence of further evidence, whether the ‘ring’ shown in my image was caused by *C. muscicola* must remain unproven – even though basidiomes were present. This and other situations I have encountered have seemed ambivalent with regard to trophic mode – and in this connection it should be noted that Knudsen & Versterholt (2012) suggest the species can behave as a saprotrophe. (The presence of fruiting bodies may of course give only a limited indication of the activity of this species.)

As Marren (2012, p. 162) notes of many British fungi: ‘you can describe a fungus as rarely reported but apparently widespread’ or ‘rarely reported but apparently frequent’. He goes on to point out that it is the rarity of recorders which is usually

the explanation. It does not help that fungi specialising in attacking bryophytes are very poorly known. Spooner & Roberts (2005) discuss them in general but do not mention *C. muscicola* in this connection. Amongst field guides, this species is mentioned only in Buczacki *et al.* (2012). The latter book states the spores of this species are white: as website images and my own examinations have confirmed, they (and the spore-bearing surface) are actually pinkish-brown at maturity – a colour that frequently dusts the lower caps where tiered groups are present. This seems to be a useful feature in separating *Chromocyphella* from the superficially similar *Rimbachia* spp., which also occur on mosses, and have whiter caps, sometimes with gill-like folds within – and white spores.

My finds (*cf.* Marren's remarks) seem to suggest the species is commoner in the county than might appear, especially given the abundance of humid mossy locations for which our area is justly famous. I can therefore suggest that looking out for it as an interesting observational challenge, and especially from early until late winter when the basidiomes may be present for quite lengthy periods. Photographic records of rings of decaying moss with basidiomes present would also be of interest.

Acknowledgements

I am especially grateful to Stip Helleman for permission to show the image from his website www.helotiales.nl. Liz Holden ('Mar Mycology') gave me very useful comments on an earlier version of the text and drew my attention to *Funga Nordica*. Martyn Ainsworth at RBG Kew also gave useful advice.

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The status of the Bog Orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa* (L.) Kuntze) in Cumbria

Ian O. Brodie, 7 Rowan Gardens, Natland, LA9 7FJ

Alan Gendle, Strathmore, Grayrigg, LA8 9BU

The Bog Orchid, the smallest orchid found in the U.K., has a circumpolar distribution. In the U.K., north-west Scotland holds the majority of sites on which this plant occurs and, after the New Forest, Cumbria holds some of the strongest English populations. The orchid was once more widely distributed in England but changes to drainage systems and pressures from grazing have made it extinct in many of its former sites. The recent disappearance of this plant from some of its mid-Wales sites confirms conservation concerns for its future (Robertston, 2013). Porter (1994) summarised the national status of this species, which is still categorised as Nationally Scarce, being found in more than 15 but fewer than 100 hectads (10 × 10 kilometre squares) in Britain since 1970.

In the surveys for the *Flora of Cumbria* (Halliday, 1997) the Bog Orchid was recognised as being present in 10 tetrads, though it had proved unfound at some previously recorded sites. In the Cumbria Rare Plants Register (CRPR) – an as yet unpublished database managed by Mike Porter for post-*Flora* records – the species had been noted at 10 sites in 2013 up to the time of writing.

The size and colour of the Bog Orchid make it not the easiest plant to find, and its favoured locations, almost entirely beside runnels in *Sphagnum* bogs, make it usually ‘off the beaten track’ for the casual observer. Since the surveys for the *Flora*, three new sites holding reasonable populations have been discovered, confirming that this is probably still under-recorded in Cumbria. In the last three seasons a number of existing and historic sites along with a previously recognised but unrecorded site have been revisited by a small team of observers. A number of sites with promising habitat for the orchid have also been searched.

The *Flora* notes that two Cumbrian sites can hold populations of over 100 plants whilst others may only hold fewer than five plants. The position as to the number of flowering stems varies much from year to year; for example, in 2010 few if any flowers were noted from one of the larger sites due to the excessive dryness of the ground coupled with the dried out bog unusually allowing sheep access.

The following represent all the present and past Cumbrian sites for this species that are known to the writers, grouped in their respective hectads. (The site numbering relates to the authors’ recording activities rather than geographical

positions.) Exact locations have been deliberately left vague, since this species and its habitats are extremely vulnerable to repeated trampling, and some are quite hazardous too.

Site 1: this is one of the largest sites and diligent searching by a number of observers, sometimes following leads from visiting botanists, has led to a peak count of over 300 flowering stems found in 2012 (plate 9). In essence this is an amalgam of several discrete areas. Most plants are found either in the typical *Sphagnum* runnel-side locations, but also a number by small becks. [NY20/ 'Wrynose Pass']

Site 2: Another large site: this can hold over 100 flowering stems although counting is difficult due to the instability of the raft of *Sphagnum* on which the plants nestle. In 2011 some 88 spikes were counted but almost none in an earlier dry season. [NY30/ 'Ambleside']

Site 3: This area of adjacent sites was first reported in 2005 (Clarke, 2005) and comprises a classic *Sphagnum* runnel site with additional plants amongst the almost adjacent bogs. The maximum count from this area is the low 20s. The plants here were quite lush, reaching some 8.5 cm in height. [NY30/ 'Ambleside']

Site 4: A further site in the Ambleside area, on Loughrigg Fell, has not been re-found in recent years. There are several areas of suitable habitat on this fell which have been investigated without success to date. [NY30/ 'Ambleside']

Site 5: This site was noted as being re-found in the 1990s and was found at a field meeting of Carlisle Natural History Society on 24 June 2000, when a few small spikes were seen. Subsequent and fairly exhaustive searches have been unable to find plants in recent years. This site does not appear in the *Flora*. It is on Common Land owned by the National Trust. [NY10/ 'Wastwater']

Site 6: This site was first noted in 2010 when John Hooson (National Trust) and Simon Webb (Natural England) were examining a calcareous flush. This is our most unusual site as the orchid plants sit on vegetative tufts above and within the flushes. A maximum count of nearly 50 was made in 2011 but with significantly fewer in 2012. This may possibly be the only productive site in NT ownership at present. [NY40/ 'Kentmere']

Site 7: This was previously noted in the CRPR as being found in 1988. It was re-found by the authors in 2012 on an unreachable small islet in a *Sphagnum* mire with runnels on either side. It appears, in all but the driest of summers, to be safe from sheep nibbling. Over a dozen plants were noted. [SD29/ 'Mid-Duddon']

- Site 8:** This was reported in 1988 in the CRPR at Mawthwaite Moss, which now appears unviable. [SD28/ 'Broughton-in-Furness']
- Site 9:** Various reports have been noted for this area in recent years and but these have proved contradictory. AG re-found a population here in 2013, which may be the same as noted in 1998. A few other potential sites in this area have been investigated but with no success. One original report, from the Bradford Botany Group (via Peter Burton), noted roadsides sites along Corney Fell between Fell Gate and Buckbarrow Beck. Another report, away from the road, suggested a site had been destroyed through the use of quad bikes. In 2013 AG found 5 populations with 16 flowering spikes but almost a kilometre from the road. Clearly this area would benefit from further investigation. [SD19/ 'Ulpha']
- Site 10:** Surprisingly, this is the only site found within Cumbria outside the Lake District National Park. Reported in 1988 by Mike Porter, the site was last visited in 2013 when AG found four flowering spikes. [SD69/ 'Sedbergh']
- Site 11:** Although this site was noted as last being visited in 1971 it has probably been seen in recent years. It was visited by the authors in 2013 after extensive searches of adjacent areas. Two small populations may have suffered from grazing pressures in the past and whilst sheep are to be removed from the open fell the potential threat from browsing by Red Deer remains. [NY51/ 'Shap']
- Site 12:** This site was visited in 2005 by AG who found two plants. Subsequent visits indicated that the side stream site had been washed away and the stream had changed course. A detailed search of the area and of other runnels and streams around the head of Haweswater proved unsuccessful in revealing any further plants. [NY41/ 'Martindale']
- Site 13:** The southernmost of this relatively close assemblage of sites was reported in 2004. The authors, with others, found a single plant here in 2013. [NY33/ 'Carrock Fell']
- Site 14:** This well known site near a road was once seasonally fenced to keep grazing sheep away but the fence is no longer extant. A small number of Bog Orchids are still found each year. [NY33/ 'Carrock Fell']
- Site 15:** This site was reported in 1987 and is at the highest altitude for the orchid in Cumbria (365 m). Two references suggested two almost adjacent sites. The authors, with others, found a single site with four flowering spikes and two leaf rosettes in 2013. [NY33/ 'Carrock Fell']
- Site 16:** The lowest of the Carrock Fell sites, reported also in 1987, appeared to be unviable and overgrown in 2013. Grazing by ponies is now at a much lower density and extensive growth of out-competing vegetation may have caused this

site to be lost. [NY33/ 'Carrock Fell']

Site 17: This relatively high level site (280m) was last recorded in 1995. Despite the area showing some potentially good habitat no plants were found in 2013. [NY21/ 'Borrowdale']

Site 18: Recent searches of this site have been unsuccessful. The last definite report was in 2010; plants had been found in two distinct areas. [NY21/ 'Borrowdale']

Site 19: Betty King noted a Bog Orchid on a previously unknown site in 2012. AG visited the site in 2013 and found a reasonable number of plants but a further visit by BK and David Benham found over 50 flowering spikes in the area. This is, arguably, the third most important site in Cumbria for population of the orchid and, like the two other more recent finds, suggest that other important sites may yet remain unknown. [SD28/ 'Broughton-in-Furness']

Site 20: Recorded in the CRPR in 1988, this site on Forestry Commission land was not refound during a search in 2011. [SD39/ 'Hawkshead']

Sites 1, 2 & 3 are all on Langdale Commons. In 2013, the management of this land reverted to the Lowther Estates following the ending of the lease with the National Trust. Sites 11 and 12 are both within the ownership of United Utilities and currently managed for them by the RSPB who are aware of the conservation value of these sites. Sites 14, 15 and 16 are on Common Land owned by the Lake District National Park Authority and some provisional discussions have been held with them to inform their future management of this land. Sites 17 and 18 are on National Trust land. A further site reported in Langdale in 1992 also needs to be researched. Some additional areas of potential good habitat have been searched, so far unsuccessfully. Some north western dales, the Birker Fell and Wrynose areas and others may be the subject of searches in the coming years.

Conclusions

With variable counts from year to year and the potential discovery of new sites it is difficult fully to appreciate the importance of the Cumbrian populations of Bog Orchid. Certainly some sites have been lost and others are at risk of being lost, which fits the national picture over the last few decades. Yet the total 'population' of 500 to 600 known plants makes Cumbria very significant for the status of this plant in England. One site contains more than half of this total, and the five most populous sites contribute over 500 of the known plants. Adjoined hectads NY20 and NY30 must surely be the most important area for the Bog Orchid in England.

Of these five sites, three were only discovered in the past few years which gives encouragement for further exploration. However, the small numbers of plants on the remainder of the sites suggests that these may be vulnerable to becoming lost.

Our thanks go to David Benham, Krysia Brodie, Brian Gomm, Betty King, and Mike Porter for various assistance during the last few years. All detailed site references have been lodged with the Rare Plants Register. Any reported sightings would be welcomed by the authors.

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John Hamer 1947 – 2013

The very unexpected loss of John last autumn came as great shock to us all, and just at the time when the previous issue of this journal was about to go to print.

John was born on 19th February, 1947 in Derby. His family, including his sister Margaret, soon moved to London, where he spent his childhood. Derbyshire, however, remained in his blood – and the first football result he would always look for was Derby County. Surprisingly, it was in London that John's lifelong love of landscape and natural history developed, and Margaret recalls bird watching with him at that time. At school he particularly enjoyed Geography, and the window this gave him into the world, reading avidly, working it out for himself and achieving a deep understanding of the subject – sufficient for him to read Geography at Sheffield University.

It was through the Methodist Society at Sheffield University that John met Betty, when she was an 18 year old fresher. They married in 1971. After leaving Sheffield University, John went to Leeds to take a teaching qualification after which he taught Geography in Nigeria for Voluntary Service Overseas. On his return to the UK he embarked on a career in Town Planning and eventually moved to Carlisle in 1975 as a Planning Officer with Carlisle City Council. He remained there in the Local Plans section until he retired in 2006; his work left a lasting legacy on the landscape, including the pedestrianisation of the city centre.

John and Betty joined Carlisle Natural History Society in the 1974/75 season and became active members. John was soon elected to the Society's Council, and became Assistant Secretary. He progressed to become Secretary in 1986, organising the programme, and after handing on that role in 1991 remained a valued member of the Council. John was always willing to contribute to the Society's activities, whether leading a workshop and fieldtrip on shorebird recognition or making personal visits to Miltonrigg Wood to gather information on woodland birds for the current project to survey the wildlife of that site. He was a regular attendee at the annual 'Wild Goose Chase' field meetings to the north Solway and Loch Ken and always contributed with his keen observations and expert knowledge of birds. John took on the mantle of leadership of these trips in 2010 – and had been due to lead the 2014 meeting.

My own encounters with John date from 1981 when I started as the warden on the RSPB reserve of Geltsdale. He had offered his services as a volunteer. When work started in earnest at Geltsdale in 1983, John was there to help with tree planting, fencing and especially in the making of the islands in Tindale Tarn. After several trips pushing the boat out full of rocks to the locations of the islands, I was informed by Betty that John was not a particularly strong swimmer! Fortunately,

the tarn was very shallow where we were working and John survived to tell the tale. His ever-reliable expertise on birds was a great help to me with *Bird Watching* magazine weekends in the 1990s, covering the north of England and southern Scotland.

John and Betty spent many days walking the fells of the Lake District and northern Pennines, usually together and often accompanied by their son Paul and the latest of their series of collies. Each summer from 1986 onwards John and his family took strenuous walking holidays in the Alps. Their interests soon extended to hill-walking (winter and summer) north of the Border, and they completed their 'Munros' together on Bidean nam Bian in 1992. Their mountain travels also took them to America and Europe, but wherever John happened to go, his interest in the natural world was ever present. He always took pleasure in recounting such experiences – and especially the birds he had seen.

In 1994, John and Betty joined the 'Rucksack Club', which became a big part of their lives. They threw themselves enthusiastically into all aspects of Club life. Attending, and often organising, many Meets in Scotland, including Easter and Hogmanay, they went further afield to the Pyrenees, the Alps, Norway and Morocco. This led to three tours through the Nepalese Himalayas, during which John climbed some well-known trekking peaks: Parchamo, Mera Peak and Yala Peak. Tragically, and despite his considerable skills and experience, John was claimed by the mountains he loved – a fatal fall in Skye descending from the Cuillin ridge during the Club's Meet in September 2013.

From 2002 onwards, John had become heavily involved in the monitoring of Peregrines in Cumbria for Geoff Horne. He took on the task of surveying ten sites where long walks to remote crags were required. His detailed observations of these spectacular birds were an indispensable contribution to the annual monitoring of the Peregrine population in the county, and added greatly to our knowledge of what was happening to it.

The winter indoor meetings of CNHS were always something which John had much enjoyed. Over many years, along with Rob Shaw, John and I took it in turns to drive into Carlisle, so we feel his loss especially. Without a doubt, John (plate 10) will be greatly missed by many from the Society, and from other walks of life too.

John Miles

Society Announcements & 'Noticeboard'

Society Matters

Officers for 2014/15: **President:** Stephen Hewitt; **Vice-Presidents:** David Clarke, Geoff Horne, Jeremy Roberts; **Secretary:** Marie Saag (01228 670671) info@carlisenats.org.uk **Treasurer:** Anne Abbs; **Asst Secretary:** post vacant; **Recorder:** Frank Mawby recorder@carlisenats.org.uk; **Editor:** David Clarke; **Communications Officer:** Teresa Frost. **Council members:** Roy Atkins, Russell Gomm, Sam Griffin, Robin Hodgson, Dorothy Iveson, Brian Spencer, Mike Abbs.

Summer Programme 2014/15: this includes several meetings at Miltonrigg Wood, Brampton – both at weekends and evenings. This should maximise opportunities to progress the wildlife survey of the site that we started last year. Members are also encouraged to visit the site at other times, and submit records to Stephen Hewitt or <http://tinyurl.com/Miltonrigg>. Please contact Steve for further details.

Lancaster University herbarium transferred to Tullie House Museum

The Museum has acquired the important herbarium of some 30,000 specimens built up by Dr Geoffrey Halliday at Lancaster University, including a significant amount of Cumbrian material generated through the *Flora of Cumbria* survey team that Geoffrey leads. (Fuller details in next issue).

Cumbrian Wildlife Recorders' Conference

The annual recorders' conference organised by Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre will be on Saturday 8 November at Tullie House Museum. Speakers and posters on wildlife recording projects in Cumbria are invited. Contact: info@cbdc.org.uk.

Dipterists' Forum Conference at Tullie House Museum

The national society of British dipterists is holding its annual conference at Tullie House on 22 November. CNHS members and any other interested parties are welcome to attend.

Bioblitzes 2014

Solway Wetlands are organising a Bioblitz at Campfield Marsh from Friday 6 – Saturday 7 June.

CBDC and Tullie House Museum are partnering Allerdale Borough Council in a Bioblitz at Curwen Park in Workington from 12 noon on Saturday 19 July to noon on Sunday 20 July. CNHS members will be very welcome to attend either or both these events with friends and family to join in the activities, do some recording and help promote the Society.

Visit: <http://www.cbdc.org.uk/index.php?page=bioblitzes> for further information.

CNHS Website: <http://www.Carlisenats.org.uk>.

CNHS Members' Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CarlisleNats/>

CNHS Public Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Carlisle-Natural-History-Society/351267851427>

CNHS on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CarlisleNats>



1. (p. 1)

Black Guillemot

Talkin Tarn,
22 December 2013

© *Nick Franklin*

2. (p. 1)

'Siberian Chiffchaff'

Low Mill, Dalston,
12 February 2014

© *Tristan Reid*



3. (p. 6)

Assembled remains of White-
tailed Tropicbird (*Phaethon*
lepturus)

From Mawbray shore,
6 January 2013

© *Stephen Hewitt*



4. (p. 12)
The slime mould
Fuligo septica

Inset: the beetle
Anisotoma humeralis
© The WCG

[images not to scale]

5. (p. 14)
The horse-hair worm *Gordius villoti*

[scale: ca. 5 cm]

Plates 4 & 5 © James Thomas



6. (p. 22) Northern Crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* ssp *hermaphroditum*.
Knock Ore Gill, 2013. (Anthers indicated) © Jeremy Roberts



7. (p. 26)

Fruiting bodies (basidiomes) of the fungus *Chromocyphella muscicola*.

[Scale: 5 mm]

Raven Beck woods, December 2007.

© David Clarke

8. (p. 27)

The fungus *Chromocyphella muscicola*: in Cumbria and Holland.



(above) A moss decay ring on Sycamore: - basidiome groups indicated. Aira Beck, January 2014. © David Clarke



(left) Well developed ring, with basidiomes: on *Quercus rubra*. Holland. © Stip Helleman



9. (p. 30) A Lake District site for the Bog Orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa*): 'Site 1' (Little Langdale), 2013. *Inset*: typical plant [ca. 5 cm high], 'Site 19' (Dunnerdale Fells), 16 Aug 2013. © Alan Gendle

10. (p. 34)



John Hamer (1947 - 2013)

© Hamer family

Carlisle Natural History Society – Outdoor Programme 2014

check website www.carlislenats.org.uk for updates

9th May (Friday evening) Bowness Common

Leader: Anne Abbs. Meet Glasson Moss south entrance NY230600 at 6.00pm.

10th May (Saturday) Langholm Moor - moorland birds

Leader: Geoff Home. Depart 9.00am. Meet Langholm Monument NY383856 9.45am.

17th May (Saturday) Miltonrigg Wood - wildlife survey

Contact: Stephen Hewitt. Meet in car park NY563618 at 10.30am.

1st June (Sunday) Rockcliffe Marsh

Leader: Mike Carrier (contact Stephen Hewitt). Meet Esk Boathouse NY340637 at 10.30am.

14th June (Saturday) Hodbarrow

Leader: Norman Holton/Dave Blackledge (contact SMH). Meet Hodbarrow SD174790 at 10.30am.

11th June (Wednesday evening) Miltonrigg Wood - wildlife survey

Contact: Stephen Hewitt. Meet in car park NY563618 at 6.00pm.

29th June (Sunday) Eycott Hill

Leader Jeremy Roberts (01228 560164) Meet in lay-by at NY388306 at 10.00am.

12th July (Saturday) Foulshaw Moss & Morecambe Bay

Leader David Clarke (01228 560117). Meet SD458838 at 10.30am.

25th July (Friday evening) Miltonrigg Wood - moth night

Leaders Liz Still/Mike Clementson. Meet NY563618 at 9.30pm.

16th July (Wednesday evening) Miltonrigg Wood - wildlife survey

Contact: Stephen Hewitt. Meet in car park NY563618 at 6.00pm.

9th August (Saturday) Drigg Dunes

Leader Stephen Hewitt Meet at road end SD049985 at 10.30am.

13th August (Wednesday evening) Miltonrigg Wood - wildlife survey

Contact: Stephen Hewitt. Meet in car park NY563618 at 6.00pm.

17th September (Wednesday evening) Miltonrigg Wood - wildlife survey

Contact: Stephen Hewitt. Meet in car park NY563618 at 6.00pm.

19th October (Sunday) Miltonrigg Wood - Fungus Foray

Leader Paul Nichol. Meet NY563618 at 10.00am.

Lakeland Naturalist

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