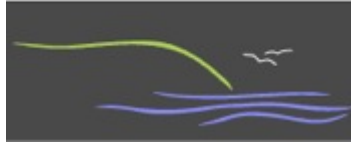


Scarborough Field Naturalists



JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

Hello everyone

Firstly, we hope you are all well and coping with the current situation. In the absence of any activities by the Society we thought it would be good to keep everyone up to date with what is going on with the limited amount of freedom we have at present.

The future for our activities is still uncertain and social distancing is likely to be with us for some time. All of our outdoor programme for most of the summer will certainly not be going ahead and our indoor meetings will depend on being able to maintain social distancing and the willingness of speakers to come to the venue. We have put out tentative alternatives to St Catherine's for the immediate future as, for social distancing, we would need a much bigger room. We will keep everyone posted as we have more information.

Despite the lockdown various activities and projects have been progressing such as Swift surveys, bat and swift box work, bird surveys etc. and individuals carrying out all sorts of surveys. We hope to give you a flavour of what we have all been up to. If you have anything of interest going on, we would like to hear from you.

Nick Gibbons

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

It's 2 am on 5 May, and I can't sleep, so I get up to make a cuppa. I see a security light on, so I look out of the window to see what's triggered it. The garden is full of fox cubs! That evening, I turn the spare bedroom into a hide and set out to watch at dusk - I have my binoculars, cameras and a glass of wine! Before long I'm watching four cubs and a lactating vixen who is clearly mum, and a second fox - dad I'm assuming. The cubs chase and fall over each other while mum sets off to forage. Every few minutes she is back with food, announcing her presence and full mouth with a mmmph mmmph mmmph call. The cubs come running and gather round for food. Those that try to suckle get a warning snap. I'd say that mum is working hard, but I know that there are free handouts in many gardens round here. I watch, delighted, as this foxy soap plays itself out evening after evening, revealing individual traits and new behaviours all the time. Then, one evening, in a quiet moment between fox activity, a couple of badgers trundle by.

I'm desperate to catch all this on film, but my attempts at photography through glass in the dark are hopeless. It's time to invest in a trail camera. With this new toy I discover and record the previously hidden world of my own garden at night. It would be a joy at the best of times, but especially now, it's the perfect antidote to lockdown!

Joan Childs



BATS



Sadly, most of the bat work has ceased but construction of bat boxes has been possible. Two large boxes have been made to replace the ones that are rotten at Broadhead and three other large ones have been repaired, two of which will be erected along the cinder track probably on the old viaduct. It will not be possible to get these up with the current 2m distance rule in place but they are ready when this is lifted. We have been able to get the new bat boxes up at Rosedale, added a few more at Low North Camp and also do some clearance work and box replacement on the FC boxes in Wykeham.

FC are restarting the volunteers as of this week and there a couple of projects that we may be able to start such as the exit survey of the FC visitor centre at Dalby. We know this is a good roost for pipistrelle bats and we will be aiming to get this organised towards the end of the month.

Depending on the virus situation we may be able to do some surveys keeping social distancing maybe in August.

Nick Gibbons

SWIFTS

The combined Scarborough Birders and Scarborough Nat's Swift project has got off to a flying start and something everyone can get involved in while staying safe and socially distancing. The survey coverage is being coordinated by Ginny Leeming and she has 14 people at present who have agreed to cover their local patches looking for Swift nest sites during June and July. At present we have nobody covering Newlands and Northstead areas so if you live close to there or are willing to spend a few evenings anywhere looking for Swifts Ginny would be pleased to hear from you. The more eyes out there the better so anywhere you live you will be able to provide some information. Negative data in the absence of Swifts is almost as valuable as positive sightings at present as we have so little data of where Swifts are breeding in the Scarborough area.

Richard Scullion has got stuck in to making and erecting Swift boxes and has managed to get 22 of them installed so far despite the problems created by the Coronavirus restrictions. In addition, he has another 40 made and 30 'flat packs' available for purchase and erection. The cost of the boxes is £10. Swifts can be slow to take to new boxes without the encouragement of enticing them by playing Swift screaming sounds. Equipment for this is still very much in the planning stage although some are already trying this using an mp3 player with a portable speaker.

It is unlikely we will get any take up to the boxes in year 1 but watch this space as we are already way ahead of where we thought we would be after 'lockdown' occurred in March, with several nest sites already identified in places such as the 'old Town, Deans Road, Wrench Green and Scalby.



ORCHIDS

The hot dry May has brought the flowering dates of many our orchids forward a week or two. Pyramidal and Bee are now in flower (15th June). On the other hand, the dry spell has meant some plants are not flowering and some seedlings have already died back and entered dormancy.



Sam Abbott and I went to the Hole of Horcum to see if the Green winged orchids were in seed on a very damp Thursday 11th June (we have permission to collect seed). We found a few spikes but seed set was poor (unusual for this species) and the capsules were unripe.

We did however find a severed spike with two green capsules. As these capsules were doomed as the flower heads were broken off, I took them to try sowing the immature seed. This is known as the 'green capsule' method and uses seed which has formed a nucleus but has not yet laid down the seed coat. It is

therefore viable in the laboratory on agar but not in the wild. This seed is now on agar with a suitable symbiotic fungus and I await germination although more in hope than expectation as I have not tried this method before.

The Green Winged Orchid plants from a Sussex rewilding project sown last year are doing reasonably well and will be ready to go back into the wild in Sussex next year - all being well. Hopefully we will have similar success with the Hole of Horcum seed. To finish on an uplifting note given the spring we have all endured. Some areas of grass at Scarborough Hospital have gone un-mown this year for the first time. This area between our two newest wards has turned into a reasonable wild flower meadow with Mignonette, Birds Foot Trefoil, Ox-eye Daisy and best of all two rather fine Bee Orchids. That made my day.



Rob Stark

WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

The first shieldbug I came across was in my garden at the end of April. It is large and distinctive purple-brown and greenish shieldbug which is covered with long hairs. The antennae and connexivum are banded black and white. During the winter, the ground colour becomes uniformly dull brown.

Dolycoris baccarum Hairy Shieldbug Family: Pentatomidae



This bug overwinters as an adult, emerging in the spring. Larvae, which are also hairy, may be found on numerous plants, particularly those in the *Rosaceae*. The new generation is complete from August onwards.

Common and widespread in many habitats throughout Britain, particularly hedgerows and woodland edges, becoming scarcer and mainly coastal in the north.

The second shieldbug was found at Throxenby Mere at the beginning of June



Eysarcoris venustissimus Woundwort Shieldbug. This is a small greenish-grey species. The head and the front of both the pronotum and scutellum are copper coloured, while the connexivum is marked with black and white. There is one generation per year; the nymphs feed on hedge woundwort *Stachys sylvatica* and sometimes other plants in the Labiateae such as white dead-nettle. New adults may be found from August onwards. Although rare in the 19th century, this shieldbug is now widespread in southern and central Britain as far north as Yorkshire, in hedgerows and woodland edges. According to the map on iRecord the northernmost edge of its range runs in a more or less straight line from Scarborough through Kirkby Moorside to Masham, just north of Ripon.

John Hume

DEEP DALE - a valley worth a visit

In the mid 1980's the Forestry Commission following the discovery of scarce habitats and species in Deep Dale (near Langdale End not Deepdale as in Oliver's Mount) began the removal of conifers from parts of this unusual valley and instigated management regimes to protect and enhance the area. Local naturalists joined in the study of the site, Peter Robinson and Gordon Simpson carried out detailed botanical surveys of the 'meadow' and marshes, Len and Norma Auckland carried out detailed studies of the beetle fauna, Colin Stephenson produced fungi lists. Since that time the site has had annual management of the grassland by forest rangers and National Park volunteers, and periodic removal of scrub as well as removal of a few trees.



In 2019 to celebrate the 100 years of the Forestry Commission and recognise the great contribution made to local wildlife conservation by Peter Robinson, it was decided to replicate the detailed botanical surveys and to publish the results. The surveys were carried out in the summer of 2019 but the decision was taken to 'add in' other wildlife groups such as bats and also to report on the geology. All of the work done is now almost written up and will soon be ready for publication. There will be just short of 100 pages, with contributions from local naturalists and geologists as well as plenty of pictures.

We hope that the book will interest not only local naturalists but others with an interest in the care of the environment and also will help guide Forestry England in its future management of this important site.

Brian Walker

Don't forget that the moth trap is still available together with pots and identification books for any members to use. Contact Rob Stark and we will try and arrange the transfer.

We try to send this out as far as possible by e-mail so being on our e-mail register is very helpful. Contact Nick Gibbons (nicholas.gibbons123@btinternet.com) to get your details added. We also have an active Facebook page where many of our members keep everyone up to date on what is going on. Follow it on Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society