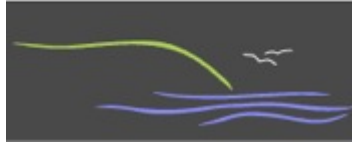


Scarborough Field Naturalists



JULY 2020 NEWSLETTER

Hello everyone

Now I have managed to crack some of the formatting etc tools this edition should hopefully take a little less time to produce. Again, many thanks for all those who have contributed articles to make this newsletter possible. I think there should be something in there for everyone to find a few points of interest and information. If you have anything you would like to contribute please send it to me. I suspect that this will not be the last one of these due to the current situation.

Nick Gibbons

WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

Dragonflies

The dragonfly season, in Scarborough, always seems to lag a few weeks behind the rest of the country, especially when we are hit by incessant north or easterly winds as we have been this year. However, when the warmer weather finally arrived towards the end of May the dragonflies finally made an appearance. There is no doubt that Wykeham Lakes is the best place to visit if you want to see dragonflies. There is now open access to the lakes complex. Species recorded so far this year are common blue damselfly, azure damselfly, large red damselfly, blue tailed damselfly, red-eyed damselfly, beautiful demoiselle, banded demoiselle, four spotted chaser, black-tailed skimmer, hairy and emperor dragonfly.

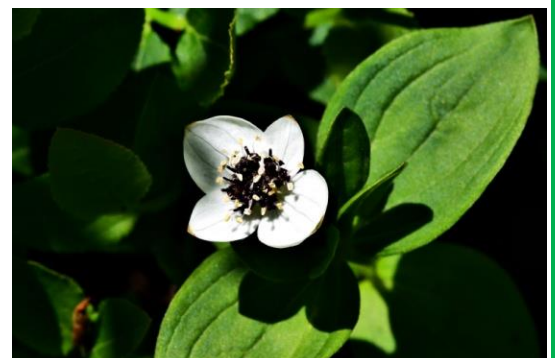


I have also seen broad-bodied chasers in Jugger Howe and at the large pond in Harwood Dale. Golden-ringed and keeled skimmer dragonflies are also now present in Jugger Howe and Fen bog.

I always feel that Throxenby Mere should have a good population of dragonflies, but it always disappoints. Therefore, I was extremely pleased to find a small colony of red-eyed damselflies on it. This is a damselfly that has previously not been recorded in the SFN area until it was found at Wykeham Lakes last year. Again, this is another species that has been moving rapidly northwards.

Dwarf cornel

This is a cold loving, northerly plant normally associated with the Scottish Highlands, and the Hole of Horcum is its most southerly record. My one and only visit to the site was some 25 years ago on an SFN visit with Colin and Beryl Stephenson, Gwenda Wadsworth and Peter and Rosemary Robinson. Fortunately, I managed to find a grid ref for it online and low and behold it was totally accurate. What seem to be white petals are not in fact white petals but are





termed 'bracts'. The true flowers are the black bits in the centre of the bract. Fortunately to find a couple in 'flower' as most plants still aren't showing the white bracts.

Also nearby was a good patch of chickweed wintergreen, *Trientalis europaea*, a member of the primrose family. It is neither a chickweed nor a wintergreen! A much better name is arctic starflower. Again a 'Scottish' plant with colonies in the north of England.

SCARBOROUGH AND YORKSHIRE CETACEANS

I am lucky to live only a five minutes' walk from the North Sea coast at Scarborough on the coast, a short distance from Scarborough's Castle Headland and Marine Drive, from which there is an open vista as far south as Flamborough Head to the south and Burniston Long Nab to the North. Beneficially the tide does not recede to point where the seabed is exposed around the Marine Drive.



The North Yorkshire coast comprises occasional sandy bays with moderate to high cliffs, providing for excellent sea watching conditions. The Marine Drive at Scarborough is a good location for the observation of Harbour Porpoise as cross currents sweep around the foot of the Headland and the nutrients emanating from the small river that is Scalby Beck to the north pass, around the headland.

Although Porpoise can be present year-round the greatest numbers can historically be observed from November through to March. The Porpoise can be observed irrespective of the state of tide.

Apart from the year round presence of Harbour Porpoise we enjoy seasonal sightings of other cetacean species, From March to October Bottlenose Dolphin regularly move up and down the Yorkshire coast although their presence in any one location or at any time or tide stage is unpredictable, it is believed that the Bottlenose Dolphin we see are part of the historic population which have resided off North East Scotland indeed, photographic evidence, has proven that a number of the visiting animals do travel regularly to that area. Indeed, this has been substantiated as to date 18 individuals seen and photographed locally have been confirmed as being on a library of marked dorsal fins held by St Andrew's University Tayside who hold information on many of the original "Scottish" population. From March to October we are also fortunate enough to benefit from occasional visits by White Beaked Dolphin, generally and offshore species but occasionally feed inshore.



Commencing in June and extending through to August we frequently have sightings of Minke Whale randomly along the Yorkshire coast with an historical gathering of the species off the northern North Yorkshire coast between August and early October principally feeding on North Sea Herring and Mackerel.



We also have occasional on an irregular visit during the summer months by larger whale species namely Humpback, Fin and Sei



Access for the public is particularly excellent on Scarborough's Marine Drive as there is extensive vehicle parking along the full length of the Marine Drive, subject to charge currently imposed between 1st March and 30th September. There is a wide footpath and the lamp posts on the landward side are numbered and observing the sea from opposite lamppost number 54 is advised. Please note the Marine Drive is a very busy road and great caution is urged should you need to cross the road.

I am a regional representative for the Sea Watch Foundation that is a national charity working to improve the conservation and protection of whales, dolphins and porpoises in British and Irish waters.

Should you observe any cetaceans either off Yorkshire or any area of the British coast please report details of the sighting either through me on scarboroughporpoise@btinternet.com, via my Facebook page of the same name or direct to Sea Watch via sightings@seawatchfoundation.org.uk

Stuart Baines

Ed's Note: - Stuart is running a cetacean watch off the Marine Drive 25th July to August 2nd. For details see Stuarts Scarborough Porpoise Facebook page

THE ORANGE TIP

ORANGE-TIP BUTTERFLY (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

Lockdown has given us the opportunity to observe our garden butterflies in more detail. We have a good patch of cuckooflower in our wildflower garden which over the years has attracted one of the prettiest of our springtime butterflies, the orange-tip. This butterfly is becoming increasingly common across most of the British Isles despite the policy in some areas of inappropriate cutting of roadside verges in June which destroys the larvae before they're ready to pupate. The male is a familiar sight with its distinctive orange tips to its wings patrolling the countryside searching plants for a mate. One male found a female on our sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronialis*) next to the wildflower garden.



Interestingly although the male is conspicuous, the striking colouration serves as a warning to predators that it is not particularly palatable due to the mustard oils in its body accumulated as it fed on its food plant as a larva. The female hides away and has a camouflaged underwing of green blotches formed of black and yellow scales when at rest with wings closed on flower heads of garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), cuckooflower or cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and so can be easily overlooked. It can often be mistaken for green-veined or small whites butterflies but we observed it had a much weaker

flight pattern, reminiscent of the wood white.



The eggs are usually laid individually on its food plant as the caterpillars are cannibalistic. The egg is initially greenish-white when first laid, turning bright orange and ultimately dark brown as the larva develops. They are relatively easy to find and worth observing with a hand lens as they are quite beautiful when seen close up.

Eggs hatch after a week or so and the caterpillar eats the shell before moving to feed on its food plant.

Flight period March-June with only one brood a year.

The caterpillar has 5 instars and overwinters as a chrysalis near the food plant.

After 10 months in the pupal stage the butterfly emerges the following spring to continue its life-cycle.

For more information on butterflies found in Yorkshire see: yorkshirbutterflies.org.uk

Pauline & Ian Popely (all photos taken by Pauline)

DALBY VISITOR CENTRE BATS

We successfully managed a bat exit survey at the Dalby visitor centre on 24th June. We had a turnout of 7 which is the limit that is currently allowed and took various precautions regarding keeping a 2m separation and also making sure the equipment was clean before and after handling.

It was a successful evening. The objective was to see which bits of the building bats were using and what species were present. This is needed such that FC can plan maintenance work on the roof. At present I am still writing it up for Cath at FC but it looks like we have a big roost of Common pipistrelle at one spot and there was a number of bats leaving the building at other points all round the building. It is ideally designed for bats with spaced timber cladding providing a wide range of roost sites. Carole and daughter Louise had the best of it, with not only the Common pip roost of which they counted 111 Common pipistrelle, but



also a number of others, including some Soprano pipistrelle leaving at various other spots in their view. I do not have a total yet but certainly around 150+ bats were present that evening. There was an unconfirmed Brown long-eared and, to keep our interest while we stared at the building, we had some lovely low passes by one or more Noctules, an occasional pass by Woodcock and two churring Nightjars serenading us from the nearby forestry.

In the light of this success I am going look at carrying out some of the planned surveys on a reduced level. We have missed the Ruston and Ruswarp ones but Ruston should be an ideal one that could be well covered by 7 people and an ideal local 'experiment'.

Thanks to all those who turned out and made this a successful and enjoyable evening.

N. Gibbons

Don't forget that the moth trap 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