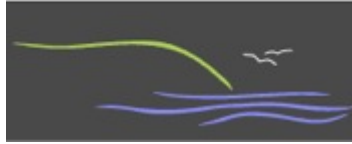


# Scarborough Field Naturalists



## DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

Hello everyone

Still little progress on getting our meetings going and can only hope that things get better in the new year with a vaccine almost in sight. We have postponed making any decision on subscriptions for 2021 but, be assured, you will stay members until such time as we know what is happening re the possibility of restarting any meetings.

Until then keep safe, have as good and a 'safe Christmas' as you can, and we look forward to seeing you all in 2021.

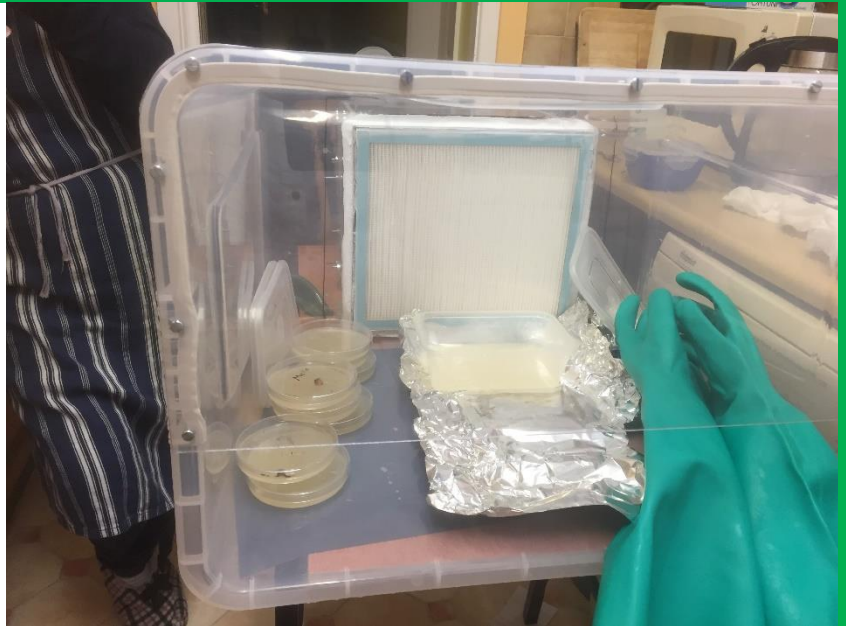
Nick Gibbons

## ORCHID PROPOGATION

This year I was given permission to collect seed from the declining population of Green Winged Orchids in the Hole of Horcum. This was in order to grow on some plants as a back up to proposed removal of thatch from the sward as part of the management of the site.

The seeds were sown onto agar plates the 15<sup>th</sup> August with a symbiotic fungus and a month later the small protocorms were visible to the naked eye. The first batch were pricked out onto sterilised agar in jam jars on 12<sup>th</sup> October and a second picking on 8<sup>th</sup> November.

My home-made laminar flow cabinet



Orchid seedlings

The first batch have now come out of a cool dark cupboard and are under artificial grow lights in my cold garage. They are starting to show the first leaf and are through the most difficult phase. They will stay in the jam jars until the end of January when I will start to move them onto compost and the real world!

We have 40 strong seedlings plus another 30 that are looking less happy but may come through.

It will be 2023 at the earliest that these plants flower so watch this space!

Rob Stark

## WYKEHAM LAKES BAT SURVEY

At last got round to writing this up for James at Dawnay Estate who kindly gave us permission to undertake the survey.

A total of 11 points were covered. Recording was started 10 minutes after dusk, at 8.40pm, and continued until 10.25. This period is recognised as the peak recording time and when most bats would have emerged and been active.

**Fig 1 Plan of recording sites and results – Wykeham Lakes**



As would be expected Common and Soprano pipistrelle were recorded at every point. The Common pipistrelle was the most abundant around the lakes including Point 10 on the woodland lake. Soprano pipistrelle followed a similar pattern but recordings were less prolific in the woodland areas (Points 8-11inc). Nathusius pipistrelle is a bat which occurs around wetland areas and is regularly found during bat box checks not too distant e.g. Tophill Lows. It is a migratory as well as resident species and as such that it can turn up anywhere, particularly at this time of the year. Sadly, none were detected during the survey.

The Myotis family of bats include Daubenton's, Natterer's, Whiskered, Brandt's and Alcatheo species in this area of the country.

Daubenton's is closely associated with water, flying low over the surface picking up insects off the surface. It was not surprising therefore that these were recorded in abundance at all the points immediately adjacent to the lakes. At Point 4 a total of 219 recordings were made for this species, about two passes per minute of recording.

The sonograms of the Myotis groups are extremely similar and, in many cases, can only be classified as 'Myotis' species. Daubenton's can be seen visually hunting low over the water and the audible detections can be verified with visual observations.

Good sonograms of Natterer's bats were recorded in the woodland area and on the causeway road area (Points 8 and 11). Whiskered and Brandt's are more difficult and are hard to separate but it is probable that one of these species was recorded along the causeway at Point 11.

Our largest local bat is the Noctule. This species is wide ranging and preferentially feeds above tree-top level. It was recorded at a number of points (4,5,7,8,10 and 11) but always in small numbers, between 1 and 13 passes during the recording period. As an 'open area' feeder it was not surprising that the highest count was at Point 8 adjacent to open grassland where prey species such as larger beetles and moths are more likely to occur.

The last species recorded was Brown long-eared. These bats have an echolocation call which is not detectable beyond a few meters from a detector and spend much of their time feeding on or within quite dense vegetation. A few passes were detected in the woodland areas adjacent to the causeway (Points 7,8,10 and 11). Due to their low rate of detectability this is likely to be an underestimate of this species in numbers if not in distribution across the site.

It was interesting that the timings of appearance of the bats was not as expected. Almost no bats were recorded until after 9.00pm, over half an hour after dusk. Normally pipistrelles and Noctules especially would be expected to be recorded some time before this, at between dusk and 10-15 minutes after dusk. The late appearance of the bats would indicate that their roost sites are some distance from the survey area. Looking at the habitat there are few old trees and few suitable buildings on the site that would accommodate a roost. What is clear is that, from the number of bats recorded, that the site is a major feeding area for a wide variety of bat species.

Nick Gibbons

## BEAVERS

The Keldy beavers are now really getting into their stride. With now 6 animals on site they are able to do some serious arboriculture. Having flooded part of the transect route used by recorders for bats, butterflies etc they are now determined to make the going tough along the rest of what was the causeway between the lakes and Sutherland Beck. My only hope that all this activity is in preparation for winter and that they will clear most of this up before May of next year. With luck they will not use it to raise the water level even higher and flood even more of the causeway.

For those of you that missed the Beaver Trust programme on beavers you can see "Beavers without borders" on their web site ([beavertrust.org](http://beavertrust.org)). Not a lot on the biology of beavers but a good look at what is happening around the country and the various opinions of landowners, fishermen etc.. They are a new Trust but I am sure they will grow with all the interest there is in the reintroductions across the UK.

Nick Gibbons

Photo by Cath Bashforth



## ODDS AND BITS

### Windy pits and bats

For those interested in bats there is a really good article by Joh Altringham on his study of the bats using these. Does not seem to be available on line at their website but if anyone wants to read it, I have a copy.

Nick Gibbons

## Cinder Track and Sustrans

The Sustrans and Scarborough Borough Council project to improve the cinder track from Scarborough to Whitby is still moving forward with the next phase being from Scarborough to the Rugby Club. We have agreed to help Tim Burnhill wherever possible with local knowledge and any data we may have on the route. There is quite a bit of interest with Great crested newts, bats and botanical data available from SBRC surveys and also surveys undertaken by Rob Stark et al during 2018. Proposals include the installation of bird and bat boxes and possible some habitat improvements. We will await further info but if anyone has any points of interest/comments regarding this section please contact Nick or Rob.

## Something from the Archives

I found this poem in the back number of one of the old Scarborough Nats report of nearly 20 years ago. I thought that as some of the people mentioned are still around it was worth revisiting. Maybe you can recognise some of them from their names, activities and characteristics.

### NATS-A YEAR IN RHYME

A house by the sea-cut sounded divine,  
With birds in the bushes, a fox looking fine,  
The squirrels they came and stared at the cats,  
And to add to the fun, we found we'd got bats.

We talked to a friend, a man called Rob Stark,  
He said "come to the Nats" don't stay in the dark,  
You'll learn about nature, its names, new and old,  
But you'll not be a Naturalist-they're the ones who get cold.

Came Tuesday evening and into the hall,  
We entered so timidly, unnerved by it all,  
But we needn't have worried, young Frank with a grin,  
Bade us two welcome and brought us on in.

The first half hour it past in a flash,  
Like Ian's note taking, full speed, head on dash!  
Then up from his seat got the secretary geezer,  
To display a dead Otter he had kept in his freezer!

The talk upon bats was a wondrous deed,  
We learned how they fed, how they hunt how they breed.  
And fired with enthusiasm home we did fly,  
To stand in the garden and stare at the sky!

As meetings progressed such rich facts we gleaned  
Ecology, voles and red kites that preened.  
And soon it was May and an outing was planned  
To foray for fungus in far distant lands.

Our first field excursion - and we sure didn't fit,  
White trainers were definitely not the correct kit!  
Though Len did advise us we wouldn't walk far,  
It turned out to be 2 miles from the car!

Now Colin got going at first with the ants,  
He waved his hands at them and made them all pant,  
They defended themselves, and from been quite placid,  
With a hiss and a spit gave off formic acid.

Len got to grips with his insecting net,  
He caught a Dor beetle and made it his pet,  
Colin was hungry and started to dig,  
And produced small snack from the nut of a pig!

Brian as always had wandered off tract,  
His mind set on bird calls, took time to come back,  
While Gwenda and Norma white bluebells discovered,  
And Beryl, a rare, green hairstreak uncovered.

The day was such fun, and again much we learned,  
At the end of the month, spent the pennies we'd earned,  
Some boots just for walking and a waterproof jacket  
A rucksack, a hand lens, we both spent a packet.

Our next field excursion to Ellerburn pond,  
We took with our teachers Ian and John,  
We saw lots of Orchids, and later we found,  
Damsel and Dragonflies flew all around.

The ground it was swampy and boots they did sink,  
But Ian and John did not even blink,  
Then we stopped for lunch and they both were impressed,  
When we offered them mats on which they could rest.

We walked up the hill through fields of green wheat,  
We saw a red admiral on a flower, replete,  
And the prettiest sight that we saw that day,  
A butterfly Orchid, a splendid display.

Kitted out nicely to a cabin we went,  
To watch for badgers with our president,  
Our vigil rewarded, much to our delight,  
We saw badgers a plenty in the forest that night.

Our next door adventure was to Jugger beck,  
Downhill all the way, the bottom a speck,  
To see the keeled skimmers we'd travelled this way,  
And four of the creatures we saw on the day.

We saw our first skippers were they large or small?  
Some naughty young ringlets having a ball!  
Bog asphodel, and sundew were there,  
Then back up the hill, all gasping for air.

Off down the dales to find royal fern,  
We slipped on the duckboards, each one in their turn,  
The fern was a site to rival all others,  
Till the burying beetle on one frond was discovered.

Our final excursion we took when the leaves,  
Were giving a fine display in the trees  
Mycology man took us off on a ramble,  
And found seven species without preamble.

The fungi were plentiful in Dalby that day,  
The amethyst deceiver we found on our way,  
Puffballs a plenty, the odd sulphur tuft,  
But with the tremicus helvelloides Colin was chuffed.

From Brian we learnt about forestry fine,  
The needle attachments on spruce trees and pine,  
And then when the light was starting to fade,  
To the tea shop and ice cream fast tracks were made.

We hope you've enjoyed our first year in rhyme,  
We just wanted you to know we've had a great time,  
We've learned lots, we've laughed lots, we've made some good chums,  
And we're hoping there's many more years left to come.

Poem by Jax Westmorland