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LEARNING MORE ABOUT CADDIS FLIES

In early June, Ian Wallace ran a Field Studies Council course on Caddis flies at Preston Montford Field Centre in Shropshire. Steve Woodward and myself went along, with five other people, and we had a most enjoyable few days as well as learning a great deal.

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Ian has studied Caddis for 30 odd years was happy to share his wide experience with us. We had a PowerPoint presentation and a session with the microscopes on the first night, after one of the Preston Montford dinners – the food here is excellent, as is the accommodation. The next day we piled into the minibus to go to the Long Mynd to collect Caddis, so we were able to appreciate the Shropshire scenery as we went. We learnt the best techniques for finding larvae of the different families and each took back specimens to study in the evening and familiarise ourselves with the characteristics of the families. Ian ran a MV light each evening to collect adult caddis but the nights were cool and the catch was not great until we took the light down to the shore of the nearby River Severn when we had good numbers of Caddis and Mayfly.

Ian was really keen to show us as many species as possible and his catchphrase was “just one more dip with the net and then we will go”, which we soon learned to take with a pinch of salt. He wore chest waders, as did a fisherman member of the group, so they were able to go into deep water to bring us back different species. Ian has wide knowledge of many insect groups so when other interesting water creatures distracted us, he usually knew something about them. One of the other course members was Scotty Dodd, the Invertebrate Conservation Officer for the Surrey Wildlife Trust and he was very knowledgeable about land invertebrates, advising us which keys

and books to use and which experts to consult, so it was not just caddis flies that we learnt about.

Over the three days we visited a number of meres and ponds, rivers, streams and bogs to get a wide variety of species and the weather was glorious.

The identification sessions were very thorough and we were able to take adult and larval specimens from Leicestershire to have our own IDs confirmed (or not!) by Ian. We added a number of species to the Grace Dieu and Ulverscroft NR lists. We could stay in the lab. until 11pm or later if we could keep our eyes open. Most people retired to the bar before this!

One of the highlights was an elusive beetle species *Macronychus quadrituberculatus* which Ian had refound in the River Severn – he waded out to get submerged branches and logs and we had to examine them minutely for this very small long-legged beetle which very obligingly posed for photos when we did eventually find, just one.

No one actually fell into the water or got swept away during the course but cameras were poised to record it, had they done so.

I can thoroughly recommend the Field Studies Council Courses and especially Preston Montford – we went last year to the Stoneflies and Mayflies course. Sue Townsend, the head of the Field Centre asked us what courses we would like to see there, so we are keeping our fingers crossed for Solitary Bees and Ants.

Helen Ikin

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

Just one early **Hedgehog** was seen this quarter visiting GF's feeders in Scraftoft on six evenings between 21 and 31 March.

Mole activity was noted at Swithland, Woodhouse Eaves, Sileby, Quorn Fields, Ratby, Grace Dieu, Benscliffe Hay and Sheet Hedges.

Rabbits were in evidence at Eaton, Branston, Knipton and Stathern, Bradgate Park, Ulverscroft NR, Mountsorrel Common, Buddon

Brook Meadows, Quorn House Park, Rutland Water, Scraftoft and Swithland where a maximum of eleven was seen. Myxomatosis was only reported from Stathern.

Two **Brown Hares** were spotted at Barkby Thorpe by HB on 24 March and one near Keyham was reported to GF who says that numbers have declined drastically in the Scraftoft area. A single hare was active in a field near Fieldfare Hide at Rutland Water in mid morning on 2 February. JMS has noted singles and sometimes two in the Branston, Eaton, Knipton and Stathern parishes.

Grey Squirrels were noted regularly in Birstall and other records came from Enderby. Bradgate Park, Grace Dieu Wood, Scraftoft – regularly, up to four, and Quorn, where they were eating new rose shoots.

A **Wood Mouse** has continued to visit GF's terrace irregularly for food, which it sometimes carried away.

Red Foxes were found dead at Ulverscroft NR and in Birstall. Droppings were noted at Benscliffe Hay and the rest of the sightings were of live foxes. One was regularly patrolling in Poultny Drive, Quorn at dusk and early morning and mating calls were heard here in February and March. Others were seen at Eastwell, Oadby, near Sainsbury's in Belgrave, regularly in JH's garden in Loughborough and many times during the quarter at Scraftoft. The Birstall foxes were seen and heard with great regularity.

Two **Stoats** were seen crossing the road near Branston and one had white hair further up its front legs than usual. Possibly, partial ermine?

JMS also had our only record of a **Weasel**, which was running across the A607 near Croxton Kerrial with a Field Vole in its mouth.

A **Mink** was seen by GP by White Horse Bridge at Birstall near the River Soar on the afternoon of 13 February and another was around Pilling's Lock on 19 January.

Seven members reported **Badgers** this quarter. Road casualties were noted at Copt Oak, East Norton, Ridlington in Rutland, Roecliffe, near The Brand, Branston, Garthorpe, Eastwell, Scraftoft and Stathern. Badger signs were observed at Grace Dieu, Misterton Marshes, Buddon, Birstall, Garendon and Sheet

Hedges. At Swithland in the cold of January, very little activity was seen but the Badgers made up for it in the two following months with extensive lawn damage and fresh latrines. Actual live Badgers were spotted on two occasions in Birstall during February.

Single **Muntjac** were seen near the Brand and in a garden at Gaddesby on two consecutive days. Muntjac droppings were identified at Ulverscroft NR.

A young **Roe Deer** jumped out of a conifer plantation over fence on to the footpath near Quorn Fields. On seeing PHG, some 50 yards away, it jumped back over the four foot fence from a standstill.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Double-figure counts of **Mute Swans** came from seven sites in the quarter with Watermead Country Park holding the highest numbers peaking at 102 in March. The long-staying adult **Whooper Swan** was located in the Cossington and Wanlip areas throughout the period until late March. A flight of ten was recorded flying over Swithland Reservoir on 9 February. Two adults present at Cropston Reservoir on 4 March were at Swithland Reservoir the following day.

The Soar Valley area was the place for wintering geese. A single **Pink-footed Goose** was at Wanlip North Lakes between 17 and 21 January whilst up to 420 **Greylag Geese** were at the same site during the month. The only other three-figure count of the period was 258 at Fosse Way Quarry in Syston on 5 February. There were also 45 hybrid geese at the former site and 28 at the later meaning that over 10% of Greylags in the area are hybridised birds - a rather appalling thought. Wanlip North Lakes was also home to the largest flocks of **Canada Geese** peaking at over 270 on 17 January whilst a single **Ross's Goose** of unknown origin was here on 21st. Presumably, the same bird was with a group of Greylags at Swithland Reservoir on 30 January. Another unusual record was three **Egyptian Geese** at Wanlip North Lakes on 21 February.

A pair of **Shelduck**, first located at Cossington Meadows on 24 January, was in the general area until at least the middle of March

with one still there at the end of the quarter. **Mandarin Duck** were at seven sites with double-figure counts at two, Blackbrook Reservoir with 20 and Groby Pool with 11, both in January. Three-figure counts of wintering **Wigeon** were at five sites in the Soar Valley with over 560 at



Wigeon © Steve Woodward

Wanlip North Lakes in January. Numbers had reduced by the middle of March but there were still 140 at this site and 70 at Cossington Meadows in the final week of the month. Although **Gadwall** were noted on 14 waters, double-figure counts occurred at just eight and only two of these held in excess of 40: Cropston Reservoir with 42 in January but Watermead CP North had by far the highest count of the period of 146 in January. Four sites had counts of **Teal** in excess of 100, the highest numbers all occurring in January, 158 at Cossington Meadows being the largest. Eight waters had three-figure counts of **Mallard** with the highest count being at Blackbrook Reservoir with 216 there in January. A single male **Pintail** was frequenting the Soar Valley area throughout the quarter making an odd excursion to Thornton Reservoir. However, three male and two female birds at Watermead CP North was a good find. Double-figure counts of **Shoveler** were at five waters but only Watermead CP North had numbers in excess of 50 peaking at 99 on 2 January. There were reasonable sized flocks of **Pochard** with four sites having numbers in excess of 30 with maxima all recorded in January: Albert Village Lake with 67, Groby Pool with 62, Watermead CP North with 36 and Swithland Reservoir with 31. A male **Red-crested Pochard** at Watermead CP North from 16 January was joined by a female on 1 February and last seen here on 5th. Into March, a male was at Swithland Reservoir on 6th whilst a pair was located at Thornton Reservoir on 22nd.

Flocks of **Tufted Duck** in excess of 100 were recorded in the Soar Valley area throughout the period at Wanlip North Lakes and Watermead CP where 165 were located in the South section during January. Away from this area, 140 were at Swithland Reservoir on 30 January with 135 still there at the end of the quarter. The only other count of significance was 95 at Trent Valley Pit also in January. A juvenile **Scaup**, present at Thornton Reservoir on 5 January, was joined by a second bird on the 6th, whilst an adult male was at Watermead CP Birstall on 19 March. Another, possibly the same bird, was at Swithland Reservoir on 31st. **Goldeneye** were at six sites but the main assembly was at Swithland Reservoir where the maximum count noted was 108 on 17 March. The highest count away from here was just 17 at Watermead CP North in January. A female **Smew** was present at Swithland Reservoir in the first week of January and a male located at the same site was intermittently noted from 30th until the end of the quarter. Two males were noted at Watermead CP South on 21 and 22 January whilst two female, red-head type were at Watermead CP North from 1 February with one still in the area in mid March. The largest congregations of **Goosander** were noted in the Soar Valley with the highest count being 34 at Watermead CP North on 21 February. The only other double-figure count away from this area was at Willesley Flash where ten were present on the same day. Swithland Reservoir was the only water to record **Ruddy Duck** with four recorded there on 1 March. A pair of **Muscovy Duck** were at Cossington Meadows on 18 March – hopefully they will not add to the growing conglomeration of non-native duck and geese in the area.

Small numbers of **Red-legged Partridge** were at nine sites with the highest count being 30 at Cossington in January, whilst three **Grey Partridges** were in the same area during the first two months.

Little Grebes were widespread with most counts of one or two, however, eight were at Wanlip North Lakes in February and 12 at Willesley Flash in March. Trilling was noted at just two sites at Hicks Lodge, Moira and Albert Village Lake. Double-figure counts of **Great Crested Grebe** came from six sites, with four

having numbers in excess of 20 with maxima being 39 at Watermead CP North in March, 27 at Thornton Reservoir in February, and 26 at both Cropston Reservoir in January and Willesley Lake in March.

Double-figure counts of **Cormorants** came from seven locations with counts in excess of 30 from three the maxima being, 32 in the roost at Swithland Reservoir, 40 at Watermead CP North both in February and over 80 at Groby Pool in February and March. Occupied nests were noted at Watermead CP from February onwards.

Up to three **Bitterns** were present in the Watermead CP expanse during January with one in particular showing well intermittently at the edge of an ice-covered pool in the North section.



Bittern @ Jim Graham

Little Egrets were at nine sites mainly in one and twos the most regular site being Cossington Meadows and surrounds but three were there on 7 February and also in DAP's Swithland garden on both 5 January and 1 February. By the first week of February there were 11 occupied **Grey Heron** nests at Watermead CP Birstall, whilst in March a pair was nesting on the shoreline of Groby Pool - well away from the safety of the normal colony on the island. There was no indication of breeding either way from Swithland Reservoir. Single birds were seen in three members' gardens during the period in Cropston, Quorn and Woodhouse Eaves.

Interestingly, all records of **Red Kite** occurred during March with up to two seen regularly in the Vale of Belvoir. In Charnwood, singles were seen in Bradgate Park, Charnwood

Lodge, Cossington Meadow and Loughborough with up to three recorded around Watermead CP. Of the 16 widespread locations where **Sparrowhawk** were encountered, five of these were member's gardens with one seen plucking a recently taken Collared Dove in Loughborough. **Buzzards** are now widespread and must be the outstanding avian success story in recent years. Counts of six or more were recorded in four areas with the best being 14 in the Vale of Belvoir in the last week of January. Display was noted at five sites during March. The only **Osprey** in the area was over Watermead CP North on 28 March. Records of **Kestrel** came from a very impressive 44 different locations. This may be due to the fact that being less common than they used to be; members are showing their concern by recording all their sightings. Pairs were identified at nine of these sites. **Peregrines** were noted at eight sites with pairs at three of these.

The deep cold snap in January and February brought **Water Rails** into the county and out into the open with records from 11 sites with at least seven seen or heard calling at Watermead CP North on 12 January and six at Cossington Meadows the following day. A very obliging individual was at Kelham Bridge under the bird feeders throughout the quarter until at 14 March. Double-figure counts of **Moorhen** were recorded at four sites in the Soar Valley with maxima 32 plus Sence Valley FP and Willesley Lake. Three-figure counts of **Coot** were recorded at Watermead CP North during the quarter with the highest being 294 on 17 January whilst 105 were at Thornton Reservoir the previous day.

Pairs of **Oystercatcher** were located at seven sites in March with three showing potential breeding, including two pairs at Cossington Meadows. The first returning **Little Ringed Plover** record of the season was of two at Albert Village Lake on 18 March with records from a further four sites by the end of the month. Two **Ringed Plover** were Cossington Meadows on 21 March.

Three-figure counts of **Golden Plover** came from just three sites; Six Hills and Cossington with 250 each and Hicks Lodge with 125. The best count of **Lapwing** was 300 at both Lockington GP and Watermead CP North on 21 January and 5 February respectively. Counts in

excess of 100 came from a further five sites. Display and breeding activity was also noted at five areas. A **Dunlin** was at Swithland Reservoir on 10 March. Single **Jack Snipe** were at five locations whilst one or two **Snipe** were at ten. Over-wintering **Woodcock** were located at 11 widespread sites with two at Cropston Leys and Groby Pool and three Watermead CP North on 10 January during the cold spell. Birds were flushed from four different areas of Ulverscroft NR during the quarter. A **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Wanlip Meadows for three days from 18 March. Single **Curlews** were noted at Cossington Meadows, Thornton Reservoir and Wanlip Meadows during March whilst a pair were in their traditional breeding site in Charnwood from 25th. Up to four wintering **Green Sandpiper** were in the Cossington/Wanlip area during the quarter whilst one was noted at Kelham Bridge on 21 January. Up to five **Redshank** were in the Soar Valley during March, whilst two were at Hicks Lodge.

There is an obvious reluctance of Members to record gulls as almost all of this quarter's records are due to the effort of one individual most of which involve Albert Village Lake. At least 6,000 **Black-headed Gull** were at Albert Village Lake with 2,500 still there mid March. Watermead CP South held 430 and Cropston Reservoir had 85 both in February. An adult **Mediterranean Gull** present at Albert Village Lake sporadically throughout January and February was joined by a second in March. Only small numbers **Common Gull** were reported with 60 at Watermead CP South on 21 February the highest count followed by nine at Cropston Reservoir on the same day. Only Albert Village Lake had three-figure counts of **Lesser Black-backed Gull** throughout the quarter with the best count of 1,100 on 24 February. The same site had 1,500 Herring Gull on 14 January but this had reduced to just 50 by 22 March. At least nine different **Yellow-legged Gulls** were here during the quarter comprising of four adults, one first-winter, three second-winter and one third-winter individuals and were accompanied by up to three **Caspian Gulls**. A second-winter **Glaucous Gull** was present between 14 January and 3 February, whilst a first-winter was there on 20 January. **Great Black-backed Gull** peaked at 250 on 14 January but had reduced to just ten by the third week of March.

Stock Doves were noted at 11 sites, the highest count being 15 at both Warren Hill Wood, Bradgate Park and Watermead CP North. Four-figure counts of **Wood Pigeon** came from two sites with the maximum being 1,500 at Ringing Hill, Shepshed and Albert Village with counts in excess of 500 from a further five. There were only two double-figure counts of 21 and 12 both around Knipton in the Vale of Belvoir on 24 January, whilst one was seen carrying nesting material at Cropston on 28 March.

Up to three **Barn Owls** were seen regularly throughout the quarter at Cossington Meadows whilst one or two were around the Knipton area of Belvoir. Singles were recorded around Copt Oak and Woodhouse with two at Thrussington. Bradgate Park was the most likely area to find **Little Owl** with records in all three months including four in January. Two were at Packington in February whilst singles were at Cossington Meadows, Branston and Eaton in Belvoir and Newtown Linford in January. Reports of **Tawny Owl** came from ten sites with most records indicating calling birds. One however, was at a tree hole at Watermead CP Birstall. The only **Long-eared Owl** reported was one at Eaton in the Vale of Belvoir on 20 January. Cossington Meadows was the only place to see **Short-eared Owl** with up to four there between 2 January and 5 March.

Single **Kingfishers** were noted at ten sites. Reports of **Green Woodpeckers** were widespread and included three gardens. The highest count was of four at both Bradgate Park and Norris Hill. **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were even more widespread with 29 sites were involved including five gardens. Seven sites were reported to have drumming birds. Single **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** were reported from three sites in Charnwood and one in the Vale of Belvoir where drumming was noted in March.

Singing or displaying **Sky Larks** were at 12 sites. Double-figure wintering flocks were at three where maxima were 105 at Cossington South Lakes in January, 65 at Watermead CP South and 40 at Sence Valley FP both in February.

The first **Sand Martins** in the area arrived on 18 March when three were at Albert Village Lake and singles at both Sence Valley FP and Wanlip Meadows. Records came from seven further

sites by the end of the month. It was not until six days after the first Sand Martins were noted that records of **Swallows** appeared when birds were noted at Cossington Meadows and the nearby Watermead CP North. Numbers increased through the month and 40 were at Cropston Reservoir and 30 at Swithland Reservoir on 31st. **House Martin** just managed to appear before the quarter's end when one was noted at Swithland Reservoir on the final day.

Double-figure counts of **Meadow Pipit** came from just two sites where maxima were 80 at Cossington Meadows and 13 at Charnwood Lodge, both in the last week of March. Singing birds were first noted on 13 March with one at Bradgate Park. Charnwood Lodge and Hicks Lodge had song by the end of the month.

Grey Wagtail records came from 13 sites with pairs noted at Cropston Reservoir, Groby Pool, Swithland Reservoir and Staunton Harold Reservoir. A pair were also in DAP's Swithland garden throughout the quarter. One, no doubt looking for warmth, was seen on a roof in Loughborough town centre on 18 January. Loughborough Market Place produced the largest gathering of **Pied Wagtail**, with up to 300 being present in January. The only other counts of note were 60 recorded at Albert Village Lake in March and 53 at Cossington Meadows in January.

It was a very poor year for **Waxwings** with just one record when three were reported in Groby on 17 February.

Wintering **Stonechat** records came from just five sites, mainly one or two, with six at Bradgate Park on 4 January being the best count. The first **Wheatear** of the spring was a male at Cossington Meadows on 21 March with another at Charnwood Lodge the only other record for the period.

Double-figure counts of **Blackbirds** came from three locations the highest count being 27 in the Measham area on 15 February. This was also the area for the largest flock of **Fieldfare** when 632 were there on the same day. Counts in excess of 100 came from seven other sites. In general there were smaller numbers of **Redwing** but 600 at Cossington Meadow on the last day of January was by far the highest count and

although recorded from 22 sites, only Swithland Wood and Watermead CP Birstall managed to reach three figure with 100 at both sites. Birds were noted feeding on berries in four members' gardens including an exceptional 70 in SML's Loughborough snow-filled garden on 9 January. **Song Thrushes** were at 19 sites including seven members' gardens whilst records of **Mistle Thrush** came from nine sites with song heard as early as two in January.

Up to two **Cetti's Warblers** were heard in the Soar Valley complex throughout the quarter with song noted late in March. Wintering **Blackcaps** were reported from five sites including three gardens with PHG's Quorn garden hosting four individuals in February one of which was singing here late in March. Up until 17 March **Chiffchaffs** were recorded at just five sites however, by the end of the month a further 20 well-spread sites had been added with song noted at eight of these. The only **Willow Warbler** recorded in the period was of one singing at Watermead CP South from 25 March.

Goldcrests were singing from four of the ten recorded sites including three at Bradgate Park during March. **Long-tailed Tits** were widely recorded with double-figure counts coming from eight sites including 21 at Trent Valley Pits. By mid-March most wintering flocks had dispersed and pairs were being recorded. The first confirmation of nesting came on 17 February when a pair was seen carrying material in Blackfordby. Other pairs with material were noted at Hunts Hill in Bradgate Park and Cropston Reservoir. The best counts of both Blue and Great Tits came from Hallgates Spinney in Bradgate Park late in March with 14 and eight respectively. There were few records of **Marsh Tit** with six sites having one or two birds with Groby Pool having up to three in January and February. However, **Willow Tits** are still struggling and were recorded at just two sites with two at Kelham Bridge feeders in February and one seen singing at Spring Cottage, near Albert Village.

One or two **Nuthatch** were at 15 sites with three at Groby Pool and up to ten in various areas of Bradgate Park. One or two **Treecreepers** were at 12 sites with up to five at Bradgate Park. However, the only song noted was at Dean's Lane, Woodhouse on 28 March.

Small numbers of **Jay** were at 15 sites whilst **Magpies** were at ten including 20 birds in a pre-roost flock at Lockington Marshes in January. The largest flock of **Jackdaw** was 410 in a roost flight over Rothley on 7 March. Other three-figure counts came from Blackbrook Reservoir with 220 on 2 January, 108 at Bradgate Park on 21 February and 100 at Cloud Hill Wood on 23 January. Pairs were noted at nest holes in Bradgate Park from 24 February. There was just one count of **Rook** in the region being 300 at Warren Hill Wood, Bradgate Park on 8 January. The largest count of Crows was at Quorn when 100 were noted on 25 March. Flocks of over 50 came from a further four sites. Some 700 **Starling** were found at Shawell Tip in January and was by far the largest flock noted, 216 at Walcote and 120 at Norris Hill both in February were the only other three-figure counts. Records of Raven came from an impressive 12 sites with up to five at Thornton Reservoir in January and four at Grace Dieu in March.

Few records were received for **House Sparrow** and the only count of significance was 34 at Noseley in January. At Easthorpe Bridge in the Vale of Belvoir 35 **Tree Sparrows** were at the feeders. Birds were noted at a further 12 sites.

There was a flock of 120 **Chaffinches** feeding in a field near Warren Hill, Bradgate Park on 8 January. Fifty at Cossington South and 40 at Rabbits Bridge were the only other counts in excess of 30. Once again, it was a poor winter for **Brambling** with six amongst the aforementioned Chaffinches being the best record the others being one at Cropston on 9 January and one in MV's Rothley garden on 1 January. Of the 12 sites where **Greenfinch** were recorded, seven of these were gardens. By far the largest count was at the Bull's Head car park, Thringstone, on 23 January when 200 were present with the next best count being just 16. As with the previous species, gardens were very important for **Goldfinches** with nine of the 21 locations being residential. Flocks in excess of 50 came from just three sites, 100 at Sence Valley FP on 3 February, 70 at Watermead CP North on 12 January and 55 at Albert Village Lake on 20 January.

Despite around 50 feeding on alders in DAP's Swithland garden, just four of the 17 recorded

sites for **Siskin** were residential areas with the other three being single-figure counts. There were three further sites with counts in of 50 or more: 50 at Ulverscroft NR on two dates in January, 100 at Sence Valley FP early in February and 160 at Benscliffe Wood on the last day of January. Large wintering flocks of **Linnet** were few and far between with just two in excess of 100, the largest being 125 at Easthorpe Bridge in Belvoir in January whilst 124 were at Cossington South Lakes in February. Double-figure counts were at just four other sites. Up to 40 **Lesser Redpoll** were in JH's Loughborough garden during February with three other members' gardens only having single-figure counts. There were just two counts of 50 or more with 100 feeding in Alders at Norris Hill in February and 50 at Sence Valley FP in early March. The best site for **Crossbill** was at Benscliffe Wood where a mobile flock of up to 36 were present through the quarter. There were small numbers at Lea Wood and a single at Blackbrook Reservoir. Small numbers of **Bullfinch** were noted throughout the quarter including six member's gardens. The largest count was of five (three males and two females), which occurred in LEH and MH's garden in Woodhouse Eaves in February. There was just one double-figure count of **Yellowhammer** for the quarter when ten were noted in a field near Old Woodhouse in January although Bradgate Park did hold at least nine singing males early in March. By far the highest count of **Reed Bunting** was 40 coming into roost at Cossington Meadows in January whilst the only record of **Corn Bunting** was of ten at Shenton in January.

Thanks to Ken Goodrich for compiling and sending us the LNC Member's bird records from the LROS database.

Jim Graham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

With two reports only for the last quarter, it was decided to include them with this quarter – thank you and please keep sending them in regularly in order that a full account of the amphibians in this area can be kept on record – the large areas of the Beacon, Broombriggs, Outwoods and Bradgate or local farms are seldom mentioned – can anyone help?

Several efts (young newts) were observed on 5 October 2009 in GF's small garden pond at Scraftoft but there are no reports from here for this quarter.

Two female newts were seen for the first time this year on 25 March by HS in her pond in Chaveney Road, Quorn. Then one adult on 8 April was followed by seven on the 9th. My own ponds in Woodhouse Eaves were both covered in light ice when they were "cleaned" at the end of the quarter and a few efts were replaced while clearing part of the mud.

During the last quarter GP observed a medium sized **Common Toad** in Nether Hall Lane, Birstall on a chilly evening following a warmish day on 28 October. Another, or the same one, was in almost the same place on the 30th. On 29 November a medium sized adult was disturbed in Mill Close, Birstall where it was found, while potting plants, hibernating beneath compost. It then buried itself under leaves.



Common Toad @ Steve Woodward

During this quarter a small adult was disturbed on 8 March during weeding in Meadow Lane Allotments, Birstall and one was seen again on 24th and on 19th an active adult was on the pavement in Front Street, Birstall. A very large adult was in Nether Hall Lane on 24th and a male clasping a female was seen on the Allotments on 27th they ambled across the path still clasped together.

On 8 April HS observed three singles plus one pair of adults in her pond in Quorn followed by five singles and a pair on the following day.

GF reported one small and one large **Common Frog** in his ponds at Scraftoft on 5 October 2009 and this quarter one large adult entered the pond on 26 January and on 13 March two were mating in the pond with a small

specimen seen on the edge. None were seen later in the quarter.

One active adult was seen in PHG's Quorn garden pool on 1 March and in the early morning of 20th two were squashed on the road nearby. On 23rd 40 clumps of spawn were counted in the flooded corner of the old moat in Buddon Brook Meadows. On the following day at a garden pond in Warwick Avenue, Quorn several adults and three clumps of spawn were seen and by 28th there were about 22 clumps of spawn.

Two frogs in amplexus were seen at Ulverscroft NR by SFW on 15 March and in Evington Park HB heard males croaking loudly but saw no spawn. He observed plenty of frogspawn in the small pond in Humberstone Park, Leicester on 24th.

By 25 March DAP had 23 clumps of frogspawn in his garden in Swithland – approximately two weeks later than last year and at Woodhouse on the same date HI counted seven clumps of spawn in the garden pond. ATO reports two adults appearing in his garden in Loughborough after rain on 19 March – they appeared to be a mated pair.

HS reports adults croaking in her Quorn garden on 12 March but there was no visible spawn and by 15th ten adults were seen. The saga continues in the next quarter.

Dorothy Jones

FISH

It appears that, according to those who study these things, the winter of 2009/2010 has been the most severe one we have experienced for several decades. Certainly, it seems to have gone on forever, and at the time of writing (16 May 2010) we are still experiencing night frosts here on the outskirts of Loughborough. During the first quarter of the year, ponds remained frozen for at least some of the time, and streams like the Wood Brook ran low, clear, and cold. (In fact, it was not until the very end of the quarter, during the last two weeks of March, that we began to see signs of life returning to the Wood Brook, where it flows through the town centre.) As a consequence, quite understandably, our fish records for the first quarter of this year have been non-existent.

Nevertheless, we do have one or two items of interest to report. The first of these concerns a small pond on the northern outskirts of Loughborough, known as the “Stonebow” Pond. This pond lies in a marshy hollow only a few yards from the Black Brook, where the stream leaves the Garendon Estate and flows through an estate of comparatively new houses on the northern edge of the Town. A few yards from the pond, on the boundary of the Garendon Estate, there is a stone bridge which crosses the stream, and this bridge is called the “Stonebow Bridge” - hence the name of the pond. Unfortunately, I have no further information on this pond and its history; in fact, I was unaware of its existence until recently, when a story concerning the pond began to circulate locally and eventually found its way into the national media. The story is that something in the pond was seizing adult **Mallard** ducks and dragging them under to consume them. For lack of any other suitable candidates, it was assumed that the culprit was a giant Pike! However, exciting though this story may be, it is all extremely improbable, to say the least: and, as is often the case in these situations, probably stems from a misinterpretation of observed events. (In other words, human beings sometimes have a tendency to see what they want to see rather than what is actually there!) The Pike (*Esox lucius*) is one of the larger British freshwater fish, and is an out-and-out predator. Another predator, the Wels or European Catfish (*Silurus glanis*) was originally introduced into England during the nineteenth century, and in recent years has been the subject of renewed interest and has been introduced into other waters. The Wels can grow to extremely large sizes, much larger than any other European freshwater fish: in fact, to the sort of sizes more commonly associated with the Sharks and Sturgeons. However, the Wels is still a rare fish in this country. The Pike, on the other hand, is a very common fish in Leicestershire waters, and although it is accepted that Pike do take ducklings, it seems very unlikely, especially in a small pond, that one would reach an appropriate size to be able to swallow an adult Mallard. (An adult Mallard would perhaps be far more likely to fall victim to a mammalian predator?) Large Pike are sometimes referred to, colloquially by anglers, as “crocodiles”; and

this nickname is in some ways an apt one. The Pike is camouflaged with a green back with pale blotches; and as with the crocodile, the eyes are set high up on the sides of the head and the jaws are extended, with the lower jaw somewhat underslung: so that from some angles, like the crocodile, the fish appears to be smiling, but in a rather sinister way! Like William Blake's Tiger, the Pike possesses a certain "fearful symmetry"; and it is therefore perhaps not surprising that, more than any other freshwater fish, the Pike has, down the ages, become a creature of folklore and mythology - as Falkus and Buller put it: "Ever since the first pike-fishing story was told there have been accounts of the pike's enormous gluttony, of a cunning, rapacious monster unequalled in ferocity, a veritable fish of blood." (Please see footnote.)

Nevertheless, in actual fact, if we strip away the folklore, then the scientific facts, as is often the case, are probably even more fascinating than the fiction. Indeed, the Pike really deserves a dedicated article, offering a more in-depth profile of this fascinating and often misunderstood species...

Still on the subject of small ponds, there is second item of interest. Each spring, the Environment Agency publishes a magazine called "Catch" which it sends out to people who bought a rod licence the previous year. The aim of this exercise is twofold: firstly, to remind anglers that they need to renew their rod licence; and, secondly, to show to the licence payers that their money is being used to good effect! Included in this spring's edition of the magazine there is a piece entitled "Quick thinking saves 1,000 fish". The article explains that last July a pollution incident stripped a lake in Braunstone Park, in Leicester, of its oxygen. Fortunately, someone saw the fish gasping on the surface, and alerted the agency, which treated the pond with hydrogen peroxide. According to the article, this prompt action saved perhaps as many as a thousand carp, roach, and rudd. It seems that incidents of pollution, rather like the poor, are always with us! However, this story helps to reinforce the message that in these situations vigilance and swift action by members of the public can often avert or at least mitigate the worst effects of these incidents. Please be vigilant!

On the subject of angling and the Environment Agency, it is perhaps worth mentioning that there have been changes over recent years in the rules relating to the close season for fishing for "coarse fish". At one time the rule was simple: there was a blanket closure of all coarse fishing waters between 15 March and 15 June. The stated reason for this was that it allowed the fish to spawn in peace, without disturbance. Whether this actually makes much difference to the fish is a moot point: many species of fish lose all interest in feeding in the run up to spawning, and become effectively uncatchable. (On the other hand, the old close season may have been beneficial for the waterfowl, which are nesting at that time of year...) In recent years, however, there have been changes to the rules, resulting in a much more complicated picture. As far as rivers and streams are concerned, the old rules still apply: they remain closed from 15 March to 15 June. However, where still waters and canals are concerned, the operation of a close season or otherwise remains at the discretion of the riparian owner, although this is sometimes the subject of negotiation between the landowner and the club or individual who rent the fishing rights (which are regarded as separate property under English law). In the case of two of our local waters, owned by Charnwood Borough Council, there is a close season in operation, but the seasons differ slightly: at Charnwood Water, which is controlled directly by the Council, the season opens for fishing on 16 June; whereas at Nanpantan Reservoir, which is controlled by an angling club, the fishing opens on 1 June. The reason for mentioning this is that during the close season at Nanpantan Reservoir the anglers are in the habit of feeding the Common or Mirror Carp, which inhabit the Reservoir. It has been said before in these reports that part of the problem with fish is that they are often not readily observable: so, if the reader would like to see some very large Mirror Carp at comparatively close quarters, there is an opportunity to do so! All that you need to do is to pop along to Nanpantan Reservoir on a warm afternoon, stand on the top of the bank above the point where the inlet flows into the Reservoir, and cast some bits of bread out onto the water! With any luck, this should result in the appearance of some real "monsters" - as

opposed to the monsters of folklore and fantasy!

Tony Onions

Footnote: The quotation is taken from Page 124, in the section on "Pike", in "Falkus and Buller's Freshwater Fishing" by Hugh Falkus and Fred Buller, published by Stanley Paul (1988).

BUTTERFLIES

With the consistently cold weather continuing until the middle of March no butterfly activity was reported until the 16th when a Brimstone was seen flying at Eaton, Small Tortoiseshells were noted in gardens at Barlestone and Loughborough and also at Misterton Marshes and in a graveyard at Groby and a Comma was also active in the Barlestone garden. By the end of the month some six species had been seen.

Between the 16th and the end of the month the **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** was reported seen in ten well spread localities.

The only **Small White *Pieris rapae*** noted were at Eaton where JMS saw one on the 21st and again on the 24th.

On the 22nd a lone **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** was watched at close range in my Quorn garden nectaring on flowers of *Scilla mischtchenkoana* and must, presumably, have survived the hard winter. The **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** was seen in ones and twos at ten widely scattered localities, including two observed by HB nectaring on a sallow at Aylestone Meadows, from the 16th to the end of the quarter. The only specimens of the **Peacock *Inachis io*** reported were both seen at Quorn: two nectaring on winter flowering heather in HS's Chaveney Road garden on the 25th and one in my Meeting Street garden on the same day. Apart from the one seen in FTS's Barlestone garden on the 16th the **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** was only seen in two additional localities: at Aylestone Meadows where two were present on the 25th and another the same day in my Quorn garden.

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

The cold evening temperatures continued for most of this quarter, only letting up on very few nights and not until the end of February was it hardly worth operating a moth trap. Apart from just a couple of nights in March, very little light trapping was done so records are a little thin on the ground. Many moth trappers around the country have reported fewer suitable nights to run traps, but are generally recording higher numbers of individual species. Has this long cold (normal!) winter been beneficial to our moths?

Members Sightings

SFW is the only member to send in any records for this quarter, ***Stigmella aurella*** mines found at Benscliffe Hay Estate on March 12. A single ***Ypsolopha ustella*** was found resting on his car in Groby on 16 March. ***Tortricodes alternella*** was recorded on the LNC survey of Grace Dieu Wood on 11 March. Steve also operated an actinic light trap in his Groby garden and recorded three **Common Quaker *Orthosia cerasi*** and a single **Hebrew Character *Orthosia gothica***.



Leaf mines of *Stigmella aurella* © Steve Woodward

Charnwood Forest Survey

Charnwood Lodge

Wednesday 24 and Thursday 25 February were both very mild nights, hovering around 7°C and 6°C respectively. A short notice phone call to

Keith Tailby on Thursday night and by 19.15 we had three MV lights running along the main track through Gisborne's Gorse. Even as we were setting up the traps a dozen moths were inspecting the lights. By the end of two hours we had recorded the grand total of 219 moths of seven species. Some of which were, 41 *Tortricodes alternella*, 25 **March Moth** *Alsophila aescularia*, 68 **Pale Brindled Beauty** *Phigalia pilosaria*, 31 **Spring Usher** *Agriopsis leucophaearia*, 24 **Dotted Border** *Agriopsis marginaria*, which included two females. Also one **Satellite** *Eupsilia transversa* and 29 **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii*, only a single **Chestnut** was in the trap, all the rest were found on tree trunks.

Brown's Hay

This interesting site produced 13 species on 21 March including 33 **Yellow Horned** *Achlya flavicornis* and a good showing of the *Orthosia* species. There were four **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii*, a species with one of the longest drawn out flight periods from September to May.

Around the county

Lount Nature Reserve

January 18th was a fairly mild night, which tempted me out to Lount Nature Reserve in the north-west of the county. 13 moths of three species a single *Acleris ferrugana/notana*, these two are impossible to identify on wing pattern alone, five **Early Moth** *Theria primaria* and



Early Moth © Graham Finch

seven **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii*. At least it was a start to the year.

Graham and Anona Finch

OTHER INSECTS

The prolonged cold and frosty spell we endured this winter, did not encourage many invertebrates to come out of hibernation, and up to the middle of March I had only three invertebrate records of my own. Fortunately by the middle of the month, things began to improve a little and, as usual, the Hymenoptera records began to increase, along with a few Coleoptera saving the day.

I don't usually include many aquatic invertebrates in my notes, as in the next two quarters there is too much to deal with, but thought it worth the while this quarter to include the Stonefly records that SFW has recorded in the woodland stream at Grace Dieu during March. We are largely in ignorance of this group and identification is rather tricky for many of us.

Plecoptera

Both larva and adult of *Leuctra nigra* were found in the woodland stream with stony bed at Grace Dieu. They are sometimes called needle flies because the wings are wrapped tightly round body at rest. The larva of *Nemoura cambrica* and *Nemoura cinerea* were also recorded at the same site.

Hemiptera

Very few records were submitted for this group which is not really surprising. On 30 January two **Green Shield Bugs** *Palomena prasina* were resting on Ivy in Beattie Avenue, Leicester, the temperature was below freezing at the time, but this small area is a sun trap. Other singles were noted here on 7 & 12 March. The only other record received was of one at Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments on 24 March. All were in hibernation colours.

Singles of the **Hawthorn Shield Bug** *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* were observed at two sites at Grace Dieu on 19 March.

A single **Gorse Bug** *Piezodorus lituratus* was beaten from gorse at Grace Dieu on 24 March

Aquatic members of this group include *Velia caprai* at Ulverscroft NR - many nymphs on the surface of the stream on 21 March and *Saldula saltatoria* hopping around wet mud on 28 March (awaiting confirmation). The only other record was of the **Common Backswimmer** *Notonecta glauca* at a field pond in Aylestone Meadows on 25 March.

Hymenoptera: Apocrita

As is usual for this quarter bumblebees afford the main interest, with the **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus terrestris* dominating most of the records for this species. The earliest records were from PHG in his Quorn garden from 16 February when a queen was seen visiting his winter flowering Honeysuckle. Two more were seen here on the 9th but this was significantly later than recent years when queens were active in January. An explosion of queens took place from the middle of March when they were reported widely, with several at Quorn from the 16th of the month and other good numbers reported at Barlestone with a maximum of four on 23rd foraging on Heathers at Birstall and elsewhere.

The only workers recorded were again at Quorn from 17 March to the end of the quarter.

The **Early Bumblebee** *Bombus pratorum* were first recorded on March 21st at Barlestone with a maximum of four queens on the 28th, foraging on Heathers and *Pieris*. Queens were also reported from Quorn from the 28th of the month, with workers present on the 30th. The only other record is for a queen with full pollen baskets on Spinney Hill Park, Leicester on 26 March.

The only report of the **Red-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus lapidarius* received was a single queen at Barlestone on 21 March, with up to two on the 28th. Again active queens of the **White-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus lucorum* were only noted from Barlestone with one on March 18th, with up to two on the 28th, again on winter flowering Heathers and *Pieris*. The only other record was of a dead specimen on a footpath Evington Park on 19 March. The most

interesting bumblebee record this quarter, is the **Tree Bumblebee** *Bombus hypnorum* which visited PHG's garden in Quorn on 21 March, seen and photographed visiting Honeysuckle, two queens were regularly seen after this until the end of the month. This bee must have a long flight season, because two were in my garden regularly in August 2009, but a welcome addition to our declining bee fauna.

This quarter, early flowering garden plants have been more important than ever for nectar seeking bees, with little in the way of sustenance in our hedgerows apart from Sallow, otherwise it would have been a bleak picture indeed.

The only record of **Honey Bees** *Apis mellifera* came from Quorn, with several from 16 March to the end of the quarter.

A few **Hairy-footed Flower Bees** *Anthophora plumipes* were recorded, from Quorn, several males and odd females from 23 March to the end of the quarter, again on winter flowering Honeysuckle and also on *Pulmonaria* by the end of the month. Other records were several males in a sheltered border Spinney Hill Park Leicester on 26 March and a single male in my garden on 26 to 28 March. SFW recorded the **Tawny Mining Bee** *Andrena fulva* at Bradgate Park where several were burrowing into a soil bank on 23 March and others were seen at Swannymote Wood on 27 March.

A female *Andrena bicolor* was foraging on Coltsfoot in Ethel Road, Leicester on 28 March.

Vespa vulgaris is the only wasp queen reported. One was on a kitchen window ledge in Goodwood Road, Leicester on 18 March.

Diptera

First prize goes to HI who recorded the only specimen for this group, the ubiquitous **Drone-fly** *Eristalis tenax* at Woodhouse on March 21st; clearly not a quarter for this group.

Coleoptera

We had a few more records for Coleoptera, mainly in the form of Ladybirds.

The most interesting record was of the Burying Beetle *Nicrophorus humator* found by SFW on the carcass of a dead fox at Ulverscroft NR on 21 March.

Other records are of *Silpha atrata* at Misterton Marshes on 16 March, found by HI and confirmed by Derek Lott, apparently a predator of snails in rather damp shady places.

The Lily Beetle *Lilioceris lili* was disturbed by GP when tidying up plants at Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments. On the 31 January it was still in a dormant state.

The Weevil *Dorytomus taeniatus* was found on willow flowers at Ulverscroft NR on 15 March by SFW and confirmed by Ray Morris.

A few more Ladybird records were received than expected, considering the harsh winter.

Seven-spots *Coccinella 7-punctata* dominated proceedings and were reported widely from mid-March onwards, usually in ones and two's but up to 35 individuals reported from Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments during this period, as against just a couple of **Two-spots** *Adelia 2-punctata* from the same site.

Harlequins *Harmonia axyrides* were rather less in evidence, numbers were noted indoors at Quorn during March, with several outdoors to the end of the month, a single active Harlequin was recorded at Birstall Allotments during this period. There appears to be some evidence of this species being parasitised by Phorid flies and the braconid wasp *Dinocampus coccinellae* and this species is not averse to devouring its own larva when necessary, let us hope numbers of this species stabilize eventually.

Other records for this group, are **Pine Ladybird** *Exochomus 4-pustulatus* recorded in March from Ulverscroft NR a first record for this reserve, also seen at Sheet Hedges Wood and Woodhouse .

A single **Orange Ladybird** *Calvia 14-guttata* at Grace Dieu completes this section.

Thanks to the five members who managed to record anything during this difficult quarter. Of minor interest, apart from dormant species disturbed from hibernation, only two records

referred to active records of any species prior to March.

Howard Bradshaw

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Other Invertebrates reported include:

Flatworms of the *Polycelis* genus from Grace Dieu and Ulverscroft NR.

The millipedes, *Cylindroiulus punctatus* from Grace Dieu and the Shenton Estate, *Tachypodoiulus niger* and *Polydesmus angustus* also from the Shenton Estate.

The snails *Discus rotundatus* and *Arianta arbustorum* were recorded at Misterton Marshes.

FLOWERING PLANTS & FERNS

We had very few records this quarter. The very cold weather obviously held everything back and the first flowering records only seem to start towards the end of March. Nothing exciting but the following is a record of the first flowering of some of the commoner species.

Hazel *Corylus avellana* in Watermead North car park. Several bushes with fully developed catkins. These are planted bushes near the car park. They flowered particularly early last year and may be of foreign stock. (PHG)

Blinks *Montia fontana* in Buddon Brook Meadows at Quorn. Abundant in the top meadow alongside Buddon Wood (not in flower). The recent trampling and puddling by grazing stock during the summer months has apparently created ideal conditions for both this and **Creeping Jenny** *Lysimachia nummularia*, which grows with it.

Spring Whitlow Grass *Erophila verna*, a colony in flower on Spinney Drive, Quorn, and in flower at Freeman's Weir in Leicester.

Danish scurvy grass *Cochlearia danica* at Quorn near the bridge over the bypass on Barrow road in flower and on a pathway in Ethel Road, Leicester.

Opposite leaved Golden Saxifrage *Chrysplenium oppositifolium* in Buddon Brook

Meadows at Quorn. Flowering on wet ground under Alder.

Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* a large colony coming into flower on the brook side in Buddon Brook Meadows in Quorn.

Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* in flower on Birstall Meadow Lane allotments, one very vigorous plant.

SFW sent in lists of plants recorded from Benscliffe Hay Estate, Sheet Hedges Wood and Misterton Marshes.

Eric Webster

FUNGI

SFW recorded a number of fungi including a new County Record of the Ascomycete *Physiography scirpi* - black dots on dead stems and leaves of *Scirpus sylvaticus*. Ellis & Ellis describes this as the Arthrimum state of *Pseudoguignardia scirpi*.

MOSSES AND LIVERWORTS

SFW recorded Bryophytes at Misterton Marshes, Grace Dieu, Priory Water, Benscliffe Hay Estate, Sheet Hedges Wood, Bradgate Park, Holwell Mineral Line, Lea Meadows, Ulverscroft NR, Watermead Country Park and Charnwood Lodge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following members and friend have contributed by sending in their records from which this bulletin has been compiled.

H Bradshaw (HB), P Bryan, D Sumner, G Felstead (GF), G L Finch (GLF), A Finch, D B Forgham, P H Gamble, J Graham, L E Hall, M Hall, J Haynes, P Hipkin, H B Hope (HBH), H Ikin, S M Lister, M McClennan, A T Onions, G Panter, D A Perry, H Shacklock, F T Smith, J M Stanley, K Tailby, M Vincent, E Webster, S F Woodward.

Apologies

Our apologies to one of our most prolific recorders, Glenys Panter, for omitting her name from the acknowledgements in Heritage 196.

Records for the second quarter of 2010 should be sent to:

Helen Ikin, 237 Forest Road, Woodhouse, Loughborough, Leics. LE12 8TZ,

email: helen@canids.freereserve.co.uk, preferably by 15 July.