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THE AYLESTONE MEADOWS

In May 2013 Aylestone Meadows is to be the site for a Bioblitz so we thought it appropriate to reprint Howard Bradshaw's article about this important site, which was first published in Heritage in 1972. Some of the scientific names will have changed but we have not attempted to bring them up to date.

The Aylestone Meadows lying to the SW of the city, stretching from Freemans Lock south to Aylestone, are probably the only area of natural history importance within the environs of the City. The Meadows lie in the Soar Valley on alluvium and river gravels at an altitude of less than 200' above sea level and are intersected by a number of deep ditches and marshy backwaters. The Grand Union Canal becomes separated from the River Soar in this region and just north of the nearby King's Lock is the old Pack Horse Bridge, a familiar sight to the many people who visit the area.

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Aylestone Meadows 2010 © Stephen Woodward

The ancient water meadows were considered of sufficient botanical importance for A E Wade, under the direction of the late A R Horwood, to carry out a field by field survey of this area and the adjacent Narborough Bog. The result was published under the 'Leicester Flora Survey Memoirs' in 1916 and was one of the first field by field surveys ever to be attempted in this country. Mr Wade commented: "*The Ice Age, no doubt, caused the Soar Valley to be greatly widened and the existence of two to three somewhat obscurely defined terraces denoting the former successive river banks, marks the number of times the water level has*

changed and the relative width of the river at different periods.

During flood periods also, and for long after, the area was no doubt water-logged and favourable to the development and extension of marsh vegetation.

Aquatic vegetation has, through the reed swamp on the one hand become converted into marsh when the water receded, and by a purely invasional process and later into Juncetum, etc., all of which stages can be seen bordering the River Soar with its aquatic vegetation; and on the other, marsh vegetation has been invaded again by aquatic conditions, and reed swamp has developed aquatic vegetation. Indeed, no area shows so well the history of the changes which this part of the county has undergone."

To say that the Aylestone Meadows have suffered during the ensuing years is a considerable understatement. Most of the water meadows have been reclaimed with waste which has been levelled out and turned into playing fields thus modifying the whole region. Extensive housing development has covered many of the remaining areas which were once under cultivation and the few water meadows which remain are mostly grazed by cattle, with the exception of one field which is still used as a hay meadow. Donkeys and horses are turned out in some of the remaining fields, youths ride motor cycles over reclaimed areas and an increasing number of youngsters patrol the area armed with air rifles.

There are also the 'Dog Kennels', a thriving Riding School and Whippet Racing on Sundays! On the other hand, parents still bring their families here for recreation and children still fish for frogspawn and sticklebacks with the same unbridled enthusiasm that we did when we were young, while the canal and the Soar are of course very popular with the fishing fraternity. Despite all the changes that have taken place and the increasing pressures of an urban population, the Meadows still contain much of interest to the naturalist. The increase in the number of playing fields certainly affords less breeding cover for some species of birds, but the remaining rough ground, ditches and marshy backwaters, colonized by such species as Bulrush and Common Reed, afford sufficient

cover for characteristic marsh species such as Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting to breed; one backwater dominated by Common Reed also supports a small colony of Reed Warbler. Willow Warbler, Whitethroat and Linnet are not uncommon but are mostly confined to the disused railway embankments when it comes to breeding. Two local species, the Whinchat and Meadow Pipit, once thought to be no longer breeding in this region, still survive. The Whinchat is thinly distributed over the whole area but needs a certain amount of rough vegetation in which to breed; unfortunately the Rowley Fields allotments, an old haunt of this species, have been cleared this summer, presumably for a housing project. The late A E Jolley records Whinchat breeding from this station as far back as 1943. The Meadow Pipit is even more vulnerable as the small remnant colony breeds only on one area of rough neglected grassland, which could conceivably end up as another playing field. Whinchat are also strongly suspected of breeding there.

Other interesting species which probably breed include Yellow Wagtail, Willow Tit and Common Partridge. Little Grebe have been heard on the Canal during the summer months but, due to its rather skulking nature, this species can be overlooked during the breeding season. Kingfishers have been seen on odd occasions in the last two or three years. The most exotic of our native species, this handsome bird has returned to many of its former breeding haunts in the last year or so and it would be nice to be able to record it nesting again within the city boundaries.

Certainly there are suitable sites within this region, particularly the steep banks of the Soar and adjoining ditches.

Turning to the invertebrate fauna, characteristic butterflies include the Wall Brown, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Small Tortoiseshell, Small Copper, Green-veined White, Large Skipper and Common Blue. Suitable habitats for some of these species get less each year, the Common Blue suffering most in this respect as an inhabitant of old grassland, it is now only seen in very small numbers in the Aylestone Meadows. The area might well produce some interesting moths as the adjacent Narborough Bog has a few relict fen species,

some of which are recorded nowhere else in Leicestershire. I don't know of any recent work that has been done on the Lepidoptera of this region.

Of the Odonata, the large Brown Hawker Dragonfly is quite common in the late summer months on the River Soar and the Canal. The Southern Hawker is much less common and I have only seen this species in territorial flight on the Grand Union Canal. Of the small dragonflies the Common Sympetrum is not infrequently seen. Among the damselflies, the Common Ischnura is an abundant species throughout this area and the White-legged Damselfly has also been noted on one stretch of the River Soar. Certainly this group of insects suffers badly from polluted waters, but one or two species like the Large Brown Hawker maintain their numbers rather well suggesting that some species of Odonata are rather more tolerant of a degree of pollution in the larval stage than others. Some members of this attractive Order of insects seem to be getting scarcer each year in many parts of the County.

Amongst the Amphibians the Common Frog breeds freely on the Canal and maintains its numbers rather well, this species doesn't appear to have declined appreciably over the years. Common Toads also spawn in the Canal, but unlike the Frog, seem to be less common than when I was a boy. With the tendency of the Common Toad to wander a long way from the breeding site, they must meet with considerable road casualties in this region.

Coarse fishing is still very popular both on the Canal and on the River Soar, Tench, Roach, Chub, Pike, Bream and even the occasional Brown Trout are caught. The continued presence of that fresh-water Crustacean, the Crayfish in the canal is interesting, as this species is rather local in the County as a whole; most records coming from the Charnwood Forest region, and generally requires clean, unpolluted streams with sandy or gravelly bottoms. Certainly there is less pollution in this area than further north of the city on the Leicester Canal where the water is so badly polluted that it is sometimes little better than an open sewer; no aquatic plants can survive here and even the hardy Three-spined Stickleback has succumbed.

It is over half a century since A E Wade recorded the Flora of Aylestone Meadows and Narborough Bog, and one would hardly expect, considering the many changes in the area, to find all of the flowering plants which he listed at that time. As this was one of the first ever field by field surveys it gives anyone interested in the flora a unique opportunity of assessing the changes in a selected habitat. The following are some of the plants recorded by A E Wade in the Aylestone Meadows and their distribution today.

Widespread, common and abundant species of the Riparial and aquatic zones.

Marsh Yellow Cress *Rorippa amphibia*
Water Cress *Rorippa x sterilis*
Water Starwort *Callitriches* spp
Water Forgetmenot *Myosotis scorpioides*
Great Hairy Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*
Water Figwort *Scrophularia aquatica*
Yellow Water Lily *Nuphar lutea*
Water Plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*
Water Pepper *Polygonum hydropiper*
Amphibious Persicaria *Polygonum amphibium*
Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*
Canadian Pondweed *Elodea canadensis*
Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*
Unbranched Bur-reed *Sparganium emersum*
Sweet Flag *Acorus calamus*
Gibbous Duckweed *Lemna gibba*
Perfoliate Pondweed *Potamogeton perfoliatus*
Curled Pondweed *Potamogeton crispus*
Fennel Pondweed *Potamogeton pectinatus*
Potamogeton x salicifolius
Great Pond Sedge *Carex riparia*
Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*

Most of these species form associations, some, particularly the Unbranched Bur-reed tend to choke the non-navigable parts of the River Soar during the summer months. Some pondweeds, particularly *Potamogeton perfoliatus* and *P. x salicifolius*, while common on the Canal, become much scarcer nearer to the City, where they are generally superseded by *P. crispus*.

The following species are locally frequent by the Canal:

Nodding Bur-Marigold Bidens cernua
Water Dropwort Oenanthe fistulosa

Marsh Woundwort *Stachys palustris*
Great Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* - this species is more common today than it was 50 years ago.

and in the Water Meadows, the following:

Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*
Meadow Cranesbill *Geranium pratense*
Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*
Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*
Marsh Ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*
Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratensis*
Brown Sedge *Carex disticha*
Common Sedge *Carex nigra*

Local and declining species:

Large Bitter-cress *Cardamine amara*
Bugle *Ajuga reptans*
Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*
Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*
Pepper Saxifrage *Silaum silaus*
Meadow Rue *Thalictrum flavum*
Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*
Betony *Betonica officinalis*
Devil's Bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*

Now very rare are:

River Crowfoot *Ranunculus fluitans*
Lady's Mantle *Alchemilla vestita*
Hay Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*
Pink Water Speedwell *Veronica catenata*
Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus*
Marsh Cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum*
Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*

The following species recorded by A E Wade from the Meadows, hedgebanks, riparial and aquatic zones are almost certainly extinct:

Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*
Goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*
Spiny Rest Harrow *Ononis spinosa*
Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*
Zigzag Clover *Trifolium medium*
Bitter Vetch *Lathyrus montana*
Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*
Rough Marsh Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*
Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica*
Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*
Stone Parsley *Sison amomum*
Fine-leaved Water Dropwort *Oenanthe aquatica*
River Water Dropwort *Oenanthe fluviatilis*
Sweet Woodruff *Galium odoratum*

Cowslip *Primula veris*
Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*
Gromwell *Lithospermum officinale*
Dogs Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*
Shining Cranesbill *Geranium lucidum*
Figwort *Scrophularia nodosa*
Crow Garlic *Allium vineale*
Wild Thyme *Thymus drucei*
Greater Duckweed *Lemna polyrrhiza*
Long-stalked Pondweed *Potamogeton paelongus*
Eared Willow *Salix aurita*
Lanceolate Water Plantain *Alisma lanceolatum*
Fen Orchid *Dactylorrhiza praetermissa*
Heath-spotted Orchid *Dactylorrhiza maculata ssp ericetorum*
Green-veined Orchid *Orchis morio*
Round-fruited Rush *Juncus compressus*
Hairy Woodrush *Luzula pilosa*
Lesser Reedmace *Typha angustifolia*
Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus*
Oval Sedge *Carex ovalis*
Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula*
Cyperus Sedge *Carex pseudocyperus*
Distant Spiked Sedge *Carex remota*
Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*
Tufted Sedge *Carex elata*
Heath Grass *Sieglungia decumbens*
Downy Oat Grass *Helictotrichon pubescens*
Quaking Grass *Briza media*
Frog-bit *Hydrocharis morsus ranae*
Adders Tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*
Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*

To set on the credit side are:

Policeman's Helmet *Impatiens glandulifera* and Orange Balsam *Impatiens capensis* two riverside species which have colonised since Wade's time.



Orange Balsam © Stephen Woodward 2009

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

The only **Hedgehog** record is of a young one killed in HBH's Loughborough garden by a Badger on 14 October.

Mole activity has been noted in Birstall, Ayston, Glooston, Hallaton cemetery, Stanton under Bardon, Beacon Hill and Swithland. Moles seem always to be active and very little stops them – not even soggy ground.

Bats have been flying on milder nights throughout the quarter and were reported from Loughborough, two sites in Quorn and Pipistrelles from Swithland.

There were **Rabbit** droppings in Stonepit Field at Donisthorpe and live ones were seen at Shoby, Bradgate Park, Swithland, Foxton and Eyebrook Reservoir.

Grey Squirrels were recorded in Saxelby churchyard and in TH's Kegworth garden where they are not often seen.

A dead **Field Vole** was found by GP on a grassy track in Birstall.

SFW's cat, Queenie, deposited a dead **Brown Rat** on his doorstep one morning in mid-October and GP saw a live one on a track in Stonton Wyville on 30 December.

JG noted a **Red Fox** crossing the road by Cropston Triangle on 27 November, there were foxes in the streets of Birstall on two dates and regular droppings in a Swithland garden betrayed its presence throughout the quarter. A dead fox was noted at Rearsby.

A **Stoat** was crossing a road near Swithland Reservoir at 8 am on 13 October and a **Weasel** was crossing a road near Keythorpe Hall on 13 November. It turned back as GP's car approached.

GP managed a tally of six dead **Badgers** and one live one. The live one was in Birstall and the corpses in Stonton Wyville, Birstall, Houghton on the Hill, Stockerston (being pecked by a Carrion Crow), Braunston-in-Rutland, Kibworth Beauchamp, East Langton and Hallaton.

Judging by the number of species which have disappeared, the flora of the water meadows must have been very rich indeed and no doubt the deterioration that has taken place over the years has had a profound effect on the Invertebrate fauna. Many of the extinct species are sadly declining in other parts of the county due to land drainage and the ploughing up of ancient pasture. This **was** one of the few known localities in the County for Brookweed, a mainly maritime plant and several other species such as Gromwell, River Water Dropwort, Long-stalked Pondweed and Tufted Sedge may well be on the verge of extinction in Leicestershire for none are recorded for this Vice-County in the Atlas of the British Flora.

Not all of the fields that were rich botanically have disappeared. The meadow which formerly held Meadow Saxifrage and Fen Orchid is still there, and I imagine not greatly changed from A E Wade's time, but no doubt certain species are very susceptible to any changes or deterioration in their habitat.

With the increasing pressures of an urban population on the perimeter of the city the playing fields have undoubtedly been a necessity, but one can only hope that the authorities can be persuaded to leave the remaining pieces of rough ground and marshy areas, as they are vital to many of the organisms that remain. Certainly if the Aylestone Meadows are to retain their already much depleted wildlife in the years to come it must be protected from any further despoliation of the natural character of the region, or the future for the flora and the fauna will be very bleak indeed.

H Bradshaw

Readers will notice that the quotation from A E Wade is not very clear in one part. We have however, quoted it verbatim. [Ed.]

References:

Wade, A E, 1919 The Flora of Aylestone and Narborough Bogs. *Transactions of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society*. 20. pp.20–46.

Leicestershire & Rutland Ornithological Society. *County Report of Wild Birds* 1943.

A large **Muntjac** was seen by DAP in the grounds of Stapleford Park on the evening of 15 December.

We are grateful to the members for their records – they seem to have ranged widely this quarter and been disciplined enough to note their sightings. By the time you get home after a journey it is sometimes difficult to remember exactly where you saw that dead Badger.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

The maximum number of **Mute Swans** reported was 16 including four young at Groby Pool on 22 November. Only two “wild” swans were noted; two **Whoopers** flew low over Swithland Reservoir on 1 December but did not land.

Two hundred **Canada Geese** were at Cossington South pits on 14 November but no **Greylags** were mentioned. In the first half of October one or two **Egyptian Geese** were present at Cropston Reservoir. A single **Shelduck** flew over Birstall on 12 December.

Cropston Reservoir held **Mandarin Ducks**, again in early October with a maximum count of 17 (with 11 males) on 11th. Not many **Wigeon** flocks were reported but there were 80 at Cossington Meadows on 24 December and 100 at Watermead Park five days earlier. The largest count of **Gadwall** only amounted to 20, these were at Cossington Meadows on 24 December. **Teal** were much more in evidence with three counts of a hundred or over. There were 100 at Watermead Park on 5 December, 118 at Wanlip Meadows on the same day and 194 at Cropston Reservoir on 18 November. Surprisingly the larger waters held few **Mallard**. Bradgate Park provided the highest counts with 91 on 12 November and 102 on 1 October. Watermead Park had the most **Shoveler** with 25 on 31 November but there were 21 at Cropston Reservoir on 14 November. Groby Pool held 44 **Pochard** on 22 November. There were 73 **Tufted Duck** at Cropston Reservoir on 12 November but the number had reduced to 57 a fortnight later. A female **Common Scoter** was noted right into the reed bed at Groby Pool on 22 November and what could have been the same bird was found



Velvet Scoter © Jim Graham

at Swithland Reservoir on 3 December. A male and two female **Velvet Scoters** arrived at Swithland Reservoir on 1 December and stayed at least until 29th. On 24 October four **Goldeneye** were reported at Cropston Reservoir and what could have been the same birds were also reported at Swithland Reservoir. The only other records were of single birds infrequently at Cropston Reservoir. Apart from one **Goosander** at Swithland Reservoir on 5 December, all others with a maximum of 22 on the last day of the year, were seen at Watermead Park. A male **Red-breasted Merganser** was on the river at Birstall on 2 December.

No **Common Partridges** were noted and **Red-legged Partridge** records came mainly from the east of the county. Again **Pheasants** were under recorded with most observations coming from members’ gardens.

Most **Cormorant** observations were at Cropston Reservoir with a maximum of 28 on 18 November. The other sightings were 18 flying over Kelham Bridge on 13 November and one over Swannymote also in November. There were 24 different **Little Egret** sightings, mostly at the main water bodies but others in the wider countryside, including a garden at Swithland. The highest count was 14 at Cropston Reservoir on 16 October. Not quite so many **Grey Herons** were reported, odd ones also turning up in gardens at Quorn and Loughborough; the largest number was ten, also at Cropston Reservoir on 9 October.

Small numbers of **Little Grebe** were noted at Bradgate Park, Groby Pool and Cropston Reservoir. There were still four at Kelham Bridge until 5 November. Apart from four **Great**

Crested Grebes at Nanpanton on 9 December all other records came from Cropston Reservoir, always double figures with a maximum of 55 on 7 October.

All **Red Kite** sights were from the east of the county. I have thought that **Sparrowhawk** numbers had fallen and this quarter there were only ten observations (this could be that we are all too familiar with them now). What records there were were widespread and included garden kills. There were slightly more **Buzzard** records with birds regularly seen in the same territories, usually in ones or twos but there were six over Buddon Wood on 6 October. **Kestrels** were generally widespread with singles or pairs noted regularly at Shepshed, Dishley, Bradgate Park and Hathern. The only **Hobby** of the quarter was a late single bird at two areas at Watermead Park on 11 October. One or two **Peregrines** were around the Swithland Reservoir and Buddon Wood area occasionally throughout the quarter.

A lone **Water Rail**, the only one of the quarter, was at Watermead Park on 17 December. **Moorhens** were presumably under recorded with ten at Cropston Reservoir being the maximum count. Apart from 116 **Coot** at Goby Pool on 22 November they were rarely noted elsewhere.

There was at least one large **Lapwing** flock in the area, this being at Lodge Farm, Quorn when there were 500 on flooded pasture land on 5 November. Cropston Reservoir had 133 on 18 November and there were 110 at Watermead Park on 11 October. Cropston Reservoir and Kelham Bridge were the only sites to have **Snipe** with a maximum of 44 on 12 November at the former and 29 at the latter on 15 October. The same sites also had the odd **Green Sandpiper** with one occasionally at Kelham Bridge throughout October and one or two at Cropston Reservoir into November.

There were occasionally over 300 **Black-headed Gulls** at Cropston Reservoir during October and November and there were 300 at Lodge Farm, Quorn on 5 December. **Common Gulls** were only reported from Cropston Reservoir with a maximum count of two on 18 November. Exactly the same comment could be made for **Herring Gulls** but they were only seen

in October. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were slightly more common with 27 at the same site on 7 October.

The amount of **Wood Pigeons** in the area probably warranted bigger counts than the 239 at Quorn on 8 December and 150 in Bradgate Park on 9 October but I can safely say that they were widespread! What were certainly more widespread than our reports suggest were **Collared Doves**, I think there were more around than the five reported!

Two **Barn Owls** in Bradgate Park were found dead within ten metres of each other in suspicious circumstances. At the end of the quarter Barn Owl pellets were found at the same site proving that at least one owl is still in the area. One or two **Little Owls** were regularly noted in the Park, mainly in October and these were also the only ones noted. Surprisingly there were only two **Tawny Owl** reported being heard at both Cropston Reservoir on 7 October and Birstall on 31 October and 30 November.

Kingfishers were found in eight sites which included gardens at Cropston and Swithland. High water levels during the summer probably affected the breeding success of this species as well as many others. **Green Woodpeckers** were noted in half a dozen sites which again included gardens at Shepshed and Groby. Its cousin the **Great Spotted Woodpecker** is now a fully-fledged garden bird and there were numerous sightings by members. Away from gardens they were seen in another eight locations. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was seen twice in the first week of December by the dam at Swithland Reservoir.

A few **Magpies** were noted with 26 at Watermead Park on 4 December the only notable count. **Jays** on the other hand have been widespread and numerous after an autumn influx from the continent. They were reported all over the area usually singly but sometimes in groups especially in October. Eight were seen in Buddon Wood and five at Cropston and Ashby. Three hundred **Jackdaws** were flying to roost over Anstey on 1 November and 80 were feeding in fields at Cropston in mid-October. A hundred **Rooks** were reported to be in a garden at Kegworth on 4 December. A "murder" of Crows, 86 strong, was feeding in ploughed fields at

Cropston on 9 October. Two **Ravens** were noted over Buddon Wood twice in October and two over Booth Wood on 1 November.

Goldcrests were widespread especially after October although there were ten at the Outwoods on the 24th, 13 were at Charnwood Lodge on 30 December and groups of five or more were common. Only one report was from a garden. **Blue Tits** and **Great Tits** were regular at garden feeders with up to a dozen of each daily in a Shepshed garden. Although **Coal Tits** were garden visitors they were mainly reported from more wooded areas; 11 were counted by the feeders in the Outwoods on 24 October. **Willow Tits** were only found at Kelham Bridge, a good site for this species, with a pair throughout the quarter and in my garden in Hugglescote where one was regular during the last two months of the year. **Marsh Tits** were slightly more common with sightings at the Outwoods, Charnwood Lodge, Puddledyke and Beacon Hill.

Bradgate Park was the main area for **Skylarks** with up to six seen regularly in October and November. One was seen at Stanton-under-Bardon and 11 at Cropston, with some singing, on 9 October. The last hirundines of the year were 120 **House Martins** over the ruins in Bradgate Park on 1 October, followed by 20 at Woodhouse two days later.

Up to a dozen **Long-tailed Tits** could be found in gardens at Shepshed, Loughborough and Cropston. There were 27 in the Outwoods in three separate parties and 19 at Charnwood Lodge in two parties. Other smaller groups were at a dozen other sites.

A **Cetti's Warbler** was heard regularly in the reed bed area of Watermead Park in the first half of December. Late **Chiffchaffs** were still being seen and heard throughout October; one at Puddledyke on 13 November could have been an over-wintering bird but four at Watermead Park on 5 December certainly were. A **Blackcap** at Quorn on 28 December was obviously another over-wintering bird.

It has been another excellent year for **Waxwings**; they were regularly seen in the Loughborough area and became a hit with the general public and the press. Apart from smaller

parties there were 240 at Dishley on 5 December and 150 at Quorn two days later.

Nuthatches were found in various woodlands in Charnwood and in a few local gardens. There were five in the Outwoods and four in Bradgate Park both in early December. Single **Treecreepers** were noted at Puddledyke, the Outwoods and Beacon Hill. Three were found at Charnwood Lodge and two at Bradgate Park in December. Very few **Wrens** were recorded but there were five at Charnwood Lodge at the end of the year. The largest number of **Starlings** reported was only 150 at Lodge Farm, Quorn in early December.

Blackbirds were only noted in gardens and none above six. There were also very few **Fieldfare** flocks about; there were 83 at Shepshed and 100 in Bradgate Park both in late October. The only **Song Thrush** records concerned single birds in gardens at Shepshed, Rothley and Loughborough. **Redwings** were even scarcer than Fieldfares with 15 at Watermead Park on 28 November and 20 at Kaye's Plantation, Quorn two days later the highest counts. Singing **Mistle Thrushes** were heard at Groby and Bradgate Park in mid-November. Others were seen at Saxelby, Halaton and Cropston.

A pair of **Stonechats** was around Coppice Wood in Bradgate Park during December, no others were noted. Apart from 100 at Stanton Wyville on 5 October, most **House Sparrow** reports were from gardens with 30 at Cropston and 20 at Loughborough being the highest counts. **Grey Wagtails** were scarce with the only observations coming from Swithland Reservoir in early October and in a Whitwick car park in early December. No **Pied Wagtail** roosts were



Stonechat © Jim Graham

mentioned, the best count being 12 at Launde on 16 November. Bradgate Park provided the only **Meadow Pipits** with good numbers in October and November. A minimum of 36 was counted on 13 October and 28 on 26 November.



Goldfinch © Jim Graham

A male **Brambling** visited a garden in Birstall on 4 December. Nearly all **Chaffinch** records were from gardens with 12 being the most counted apart from my own where there were 20 in early December. The same notes apply to **Greenfinches** where 12 was the maximum reported, all but one being a garden record. **Goldfinches** are now established as a garden bird and there were many records as such, however there were 61 in Birstall, 60 at Quorn and 29 in Bradgate Park although a garden at Cropston held 34 on 12 November. **Siskins** in small numbers were well spread across Charnwood and there were 120 in Bradgate Park and Ulverscroft, both in November. Only one record of **Linnet** was received, that was of two birds at Cropston on 9 October. A few **Lesser Redpolls** were around the area but 30 in Buddon Wood in December was the only double-figure count. **Bullfinches** with a maximum of three together were seen in about a dozen well-spread sites. Surprisingly there was only one **Yellowhammer** record, that was of 20 birds in fields adjacent to Kelham Bridge on 29 October. Even worse, there was only one record of **Reed Bunting**, just two birds at Cropston on 9 October.

Once again we must thank Ken Goodrich and the LROS for co-ordinating the records for this period.

Bas Forgham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS & FISH

Reptiles, Amphibians and Fish

As we have only one record this quarter, the report has been held over until Heritage 209.

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

Report for 2012

It is obvious that the rather strange weather conditions recorded during 2012 had a very significant, detrimental effect on the success of Odonata for the second year running, with dull, cool and wet conditions during the peak dragonfly season.

What is also noticeable from the records received is the importance of garden ponds and small pools including fishing lakes that have been recently introduced.

April - June

As is often the case, the first record of the season was a single **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* found in a Quorn garden on 4 May. It was another eight days before the next record but by the end of the month was noted in small numbers at a total of 12 sites including five garden ponds.

Four sites had **Banded Demoiselle** *Calopteryx splendens* in the quarter, unusually including a Quorn garden as this species generally likes slow-flowing waterways. The first **Blue-tailed Damselfly** *Ischnura elegans* was located at Nanpantan Reservoir on the last day of May and further singles were found at four more sites during June.

There was just one record of **Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum*, a solitary specimen at Ketton Quarry on 19 June. By contrast **Azure Damselfly** *Coenagrion puella* was recorded at nine sites from 23 May with the first three sites being garden ponds, one in Cropston and two in Quorn. Double-figure counts came from HS's Quorn garden and Puddledyke in Cropston with 13 and 20 respectively. Seen on 30 May, 20 **Red-eyed Damselflies** *Erythromma najas* at Nanpantan Reservoir was the only record in the quarter.



Broad-bodied Chaser © Jim Graham

The first **Broad-bodied Chaser** *Libellula depressa* was a male recorded in a Cropston garden on 30 May. A newly emerging female was there five days later whilst one was noted ovipositing at Swannymote Wood on 20 May and two were at Puddleyke on the 27th. The latter site was also host to the first **Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* of the season on the 23rd with ten there on 27 June. Singles were at three other sites.

There were no records for hawkers or Emperors during the quarter.

July - August

Records of **Banded Demoiselle** *Calopteryx splendens* came from eleven sites mainly in single figures with 21 along the canal at Barrow upon Soar on 1 August, the best count. There were no comments on mating or ovipositing although one was making a tasty snack for a Dunnock at Stonebow Washlands on 4 July.

Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa* were found at just three sites whilst **White-legged Damselfly** *Platycnemis pennipes* fared even worse with just two sites although 15 were found at a small fishing lake near Peatling Parva. This is apparently a new site for the species in VC55 which is usually found along slow-flowing waterways and canals.

Single **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* were found in gardens in Cropston and Quorn in July.

Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* were widespread and recorded in small numbers from 15 sites in July and August. Thirty or more at the Peatling Parva fishing lake was by far and away the highest count. Pairs and ovipositing females were noted at just three locations and just one record was received for

September. Living up to its name was **Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* which was much more widespread with records from 23 sites with four having three-figure counts: Bescaby with 200 and Fosse Way Quarry, Syston with 150, both on 23 July; the Peatling Parva fishing lake with 200 the following day and Swithland Reservoir with 100 on 25 August. By contrast, the similar looking **Azure Damselfly** *Coenagrion puella* was seen at just four sites in small numbers, the highest count being six at Appleton Park on 25 August.

The fishing lake at Peatling Parva was home to the largest count of **Red-eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma najas* with over 100 being noted on 24 July. Small numbers were found at a further three sites in the period with the final sighting at Pilling's Lock 1 August. **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma viridulum* was also found at the fishing lake with at least 30 individuals noted including many pairs and ovipositing.



Small Red-eyed Damselfly © Jim Graham

Found in all three months of the quarter, **Brown Hawker** *Aeshna grandis* was observed in 21 diverse habitats in small numbers with the highest count being five at Cropston Reservoir on 26 August. The only indication of breeding was an ovipositing female at Bescaby on 23 July. **Southern Hawker** *Aeshna cyanea* was also noted throughout from 13 sites, mainly one or two, with four at Cossington Meadows on 4 September. One was ovipositing in plant pots in HS's Quorn garden on the 9th. The first **Migrant Hawker** *Aeshna mixta* did not appear until 1 August when one was in PHG's Quorn garden. By the end of the period records came from 15 sites, mainly single-figures but ten were in Buddon Brook Meadows on 1 September and 20 at Wanlip Meadows on the 13th.

Records of single **Emperor Dragonfly** *Anax imperator* came from six well-spread sites from 12 July with a pair at Fosse Way Quarry, Syston on the 23rd the only exception and indication of breeding.

Two **Broad-bodied Chasers** *Libellula depressa* were located at both Evington Park and Saddington Reservoir (a pair) in July, with a single at Swannymote Wood on the 28th the only other record. Records of **Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* were received from just three sites all in July: singles at Rutland Water on the 1st and Bescaby on the 23rd plus 11 at Fosse Way Quarry, Syston on the latter date.

Frequently found basking in the sun on bare patches of ground near open water, records of **Black-tailed Skimmer** *Orthetrum cancellatum* came from seven sites all in July. It was generally encountered in small numbers but 39 individuals, including 27 males, were found at a relatively new lake near Bescaby on the 23rd. The last of the season was seen at Cossington Meadows on the 28th.

Rather later than would be expected, the first record of **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* was 15 fresh specimens at Bescaby on 23 July. Three were at Peatling Parva the following day and the only other record for July was a newly emergent from Cossington Meadow on the 28th. By the end of the quarter, records came from 14 locations generally in small numbers with the only other double-figure count being ten at Cossington Meadows on 5 September. Although recorded in all three months, the similar looking **Ruddy Darter** *Sympetrum sanguineum* was noted at just three sites: Rutland Water in July; Newfield Colliery in August and Rough Hill Wood, Woodhouse Eaves in September.

October - December

Unsurprisingly, this was another poor quarter for Odonata with records received from 13 sites involving five species all in October.

A single **Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* was at Swithland Reservoir waterworks garden on the 2nd.

Four **Southern Hawkers** *Aeshna cyanea* were at Cropston Reservoir on the 1st whilst singles

were at Evington Park and HS's Quorn garden on the 30th. **Migrant Hawker** *Aeshna mixta* was noted at sites five with a pair at Cropston Reservoir on 9th.

A single **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* was found at Buddon Brook Meadows on the 10th, whilst three males and two females were at Leire Mill on the 12th and a further pair were located at Stonepit Field, Donisthorpe on the 21st. The only record of **Ruddy Darter** *Sympetrum sanguineum* was three at Puddledyke on the 10th.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed during 2012. Let's hope that the weather is rather kinder to our insects in 2013 and if you don't have a wildlife garden pond maybe this is the year to introduce one.

Jim Graham

GRASSHOPPERS and BUSHCRICKETS

Report for 2012

Although many insects have suffered from the wet weather in 2012, grasshoppers seem to have had a reasonable year – probably due to the abundant growth of grass. Bush-crickets may not have fared quite so well but we have plenty of records for Roesel's Bush-cricket.

Records of 12 of our 13 species have been sent in this year. The 13th is the Dark Bush-cricket *Pholidoptera griseoaptera* which, so far, has only been recorded from Owston Wood in Leicestershire but is more frequent in Rutland.

Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum* was recorded from nine sites. Knighton, two more sites in Leicester, Swithland Wood, Broughton Astley, Fleckney, Cropston, Woodhouse and Harby and was seen as late as 18th November in a Harby garden.

Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* records came from 25 sites, several of which were within Leicester city. They include Asfordby Hill, Aylestone Meadows, Bardon Hill, Beacon Hill, Bradgate Park, Brascote Pits, Cossington Meadows, Cropston, Croft, Glen Hills, the Gynsills at Glenfield, Hamilton, Cademan Moor, Mountsorrel, Newfield Colliery NR, Puddledyke, Rough Hill at Newtown Linford, Shenton Estates, Cold Newton, Dunton Mill near Ashby Parva, Hallaton and Watermead Park.

Long-winged Conehead *Conocephalus discolor* was not quite so widespread but was recorded from five sites in Leicester including The Orchards local NR off Groby Road and Aylestone Meadows. County sites include Newfield Colliery NR, Shenton Estates, Conkers at Moira, Cossington Meadows and Rough Hill at Newtown Linford.

Short-winged Conehead *Conocephalus dorsalis* is moving across the county and HB recorded a female at Wanlip on 3 September.

Speckled Bush-cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima* is more difficult to find as its stridulation is just a tick which is best heard with an ultrasound detector. It was recorded from gardens in Ratby and Whetstone, a farm at Ullesthorpe and in hedgerows in Hallaton, Stanton Wyville, and Glooston.

Slender Groundhopper *Tetrix subulata* is getting increasingly common, often on damp sites near ponds and streams. It was noted at Sapcote, Newfield Colliery NR, along the River Soar at St Marys Mills, Thornton Reservoir and Ketton Quarry NR.

Common Groundhopper *Tetrix undulata* prefers drier locations and was only found at Newfield Colliery NR.

Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus* is probably the easiest grasshopper to find as its sewing machine-like stridulation is difficult to miss. It does prefer well established grassland. Records came from Bagworth Heath, Bardon Hill, Beacon Hill, Billa Barra Hill at Markfield, Bradgate Park, Charnwood Lodge NR, Clipsham Quarry, Nature Alive at Coalville, the Gynsills at Glenfield, a field in Harby, Mountsorrel, New Lount, Newfield Colliery, Puddledyke, Rough Hill, Swithland Wood, Ulverscroft NR and Warren Hills near Whitwick.

Field Grasshopper *Chorthippus brunneus* likes drier areas such as rockeries, road verges and sparsely vegetated banks. It was found at Asfordby Hill, Bardon Hill, Beacon Hill, Billa Barra Hill, a verge near Markfield, Bradgate Park, Brascote Pits, Great Central Way, the Gynsills, Belgrave, New Lount, Puddledyke, two sites in Ratby, Stonepit Field at Donisthorpe, Stoughton Airfield, Cold Newton and Warren Hills.

Meadow Grasshopper *Chorthippus parallelus* is quite choosy about its habitat, usually preferring damp old grassland so we were surprised to find a thriving colony on a roadside verge near Hallaton. It was a damp verge. Other sightings came from Ketton Quarry NR, Stonebow Washlands at Loughborough, the Gynsills, Bradgate Park, Puddledyke, Barkby Thorpe Road in Leicester and Asfordby Hill.

Lesser Marsh Grasshopper *Chorthippus albomarginatus* is now our commonest grasshopper and was recorded at 19 sites spread throughout the county. It seems to be present in any rough grassy area, however recently established and, despite its name, can be found in very dry places.

Mottled Grasshopper *Mymeleotettix maculatus* is the most restricted species as it likes sparsely vegetated, often stony areas with plenty of bare ground. Although, further south, it can be found on densely heather covered heaths. We have had records from Newfield Colliery, Buck Hill at Nanpantan, Bradgate Park, Hill Hole at Markfield and the spoil banks in Swithland Wood.



Mottled Grasshopper © Stephen Woodward

Thanks to the following members and friends who sent in the records – records from NatureSpot have been included:

H Bradshaw, M Billings, G Calow, J Calow, J Cranfield, S Ford, M Frankum, D Gould, H Ikin, D Nicholls, H Peacock, A E Semper, M Skevington, R Smith, P Smith, A Watson, S F Woodward.

Helen Ikin

BUTTERFLIES

During October some eight species of butterflies remained active on some of the better more sunny days, but only the Comma was noted into November.

Pieridae

A late **Large White** *Pieris rapae* was seen along a roadside verge near Markfield on 7 October and several were present in a Shepshed garden up until the 19th. The **Small White** *Pieris brassicae* was also noted at Shepshed until the 19th and singletons were seen in gardens at Quorn on the 2nd and 4th and at Hallaton on the 14th.

The **Green-veined White** *P. napi* was reported seen during early October at Aylestone Meadows, Barkby Village and Shepshed.

Nymphalidae

The **Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* was widely reported during October in some 28 localities and during the Club Wednesday morning walk on the 3rd eight were sunning themselves and nectaring on Ivy Blossom on two adjacent trees in the waterworks grounds at Swithland Reservoir. Numbers remained active until the middle of the month after which only odd ones were noted, the last sighting reported being at Quorn on the 21st.

A few **Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae* were noted during October in six widely spread localities and the species was last reported seen on the 27th in Bradgate.

The only active **Peacock** *Inachis io* reported was one seen in Hallaton Wood on the 14 October but the **Comma** *Polygona c-album*



Speckled Wood © Jim Graham

remained active throughout the month and was often seen visiting Ivy blossom. 14 were present on two Ivy clad trees along with the eight Red Admirals on the 3rd and smaller numbers were reported seen in some 18 well scattered localities, including gardens and countryside. The species was last reported in November when HB saw one in Leicester along a hedgerow in Ethel Road on the 5th and ATO saw one in his Loughborough garden on the 14th.

Satyridae

A few late individuals of the **Speckled Wood** *Pararge aegeria* were noted in October when it was reported seen in some nine separate localities and it was last noted on the 18th, at Spinney Hill Park, Leicester.

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

Primarily cold, wet and blustery just about sums up this quarter, leaving us wondering on the fortunes of our moths for next year. This quarter must surely rank as the leanest ever for moth records. Although we had the odd fairly mild evening, either side of it the weather was far from encouraging. Not only did the moths seem disinterested in taking to the wing, members' enthusiasm took a real bashing too, consequently this report is somewhat "limited".

Members Sightings

SFW recorded many mines of *Cameraria ohridella* at five locations, mainly in October. Adults of Nettle-tap *Anthophila fabriciana* were found at Ashby Parva and Hallaton in mid-October. Stonepit Field at Donisthorpe produced the only Silver Y *Autographa gamma* reported.

Light trap results

A solitary Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa* rescued the night from drawing a blank by being the only moth caught in SFW's Actinic trap at Groby on 1 October. This was the only record submitted, taken from light trapping results.

Around the county

The only other records were from GF and AF who recorded 24 species of leaf mining micro

Lepidoptera and one ***Coleophora gryphipennella*** this latter species off Rose, along a public footpath at Gopsall Hall, Shackerstone on 30 October. The conspicuous tadpole shaped mines, of ***Stigmella plagicolella*** were abundant along the Blackthorn hedgerows. A nice threesome on Elm, were ***Stigmella viscerella***, ***Phyllonorycter schreberella*** and ***Phyllonorycter tristrigella***. The mines of the two *Phyllonorycters* can be easily confused, until you get your eye in. Both are underside mines but *schreberella* is easily distinguished by having a most beautiful pale blue/green pupa case suspended on silk. On the roadside near to the entrance of the footpath ***Phyllonorycter platanoidella*** were especially plentiful on Norway Maple.

Many thanks to everyone, who has sent in their moth records for this difficult quarter.

Graham and Anona Finch

OTHER INSECTS

This quarter, records were very few – probably due to weather conditions decimating some populations and also deterring recorders from going out.

A few **Hemipteran** bugs were noted. The **Common Green Shieldbug** ***Palomina prasina*** was recorded from Hallaton, Birstall Meadows and Netherhall Lane and one in hibernation colours on Ethel Road in the city – all in October.

Just three **Hawthorn Shield Bug** ***Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*** records - a nymph at Humberstone Park on 10 October and two November records from Saxelby and Birstall churchyards.



Dock Bug © Stephen Woodward

Others in this group were the **Parent Bug** ***Elasmucha grisea*** at Abbey Meadows on 9 October and a **Dock Bug** ***Coreus marginatus*** at Birstall Meadows. The little **Rhopalid** bug ***Rhopalus subrufus*** was found at Hallaton Wood in October.

The Leafhopper ***Cicadella viridis*** was reported from Birstall Churchyard on the 26th November and finally many **Beech Felt Scale** ***Cryptococcus fagisuga*** were noted by SFW at Beacon Hill, Woodhouse on 7 November.

Diptera

Hoverflies

As expected, very few records were submitted this quarter, the bright ***Xanthogramma pedissequum*** was perhaps the most interesting sighting at Stanton under Bardon, this species appears to have had a good year. A single ***Episyrrhus balteatus*** was seen in Abbey Park in October and five were on Ivy in Ethel Road on 5 November.

Just two records of ***Syrphus ribesii***, a single at Ethel Road and two at Abbey Park in October. Other species noted were ***Syritta pipiens*** at Hallaton, ***Myathropa florea*** at Leire and ***Eristalis tenax***, rather more frequent on Ivy blossom at Hallaton, Leire, Quorn and Ethel Road, mostly in October but a few lingering to early November. ***Eristalis arbustorum*** was also recorded at Hallaton and Ashby Parva. A few records of ***Helophilus pendulus*** on Ivy in October, mostly singles, from Leire, Hallaton, Barkby and Humberstone Park, Great Central Way and Beatty Avenue all in Leicester.

A few of the common ***Melanostoma mellinum*** were still present on a roadside verge in Ethel Road on 5 November. This species appears to have several peaks, much as *Eristalis tenax* does.

Finally house-flies of the **Muscidae** family, ***Mesembrina meridiana*** and ***Neomyia cornicina*** were still active in several places during October.

Hymenoptera

Bumblebees must have suffered enormous losses this summer; consequently very few records were received for this quarter. The **Common Carder Bumblebee** ***Bombus***

pascuorum is normally still active late into this period but not this year - just singles from Barlestane in mid-October and the only other records were from Hallaton, Donisthorpe, and six noted around Globe Thistle at Abbey Park on 16 October.

Just two **Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*** records, a male at Barlestane on 17 October and a queen on Ethel Road on 30 October.

A **Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*** was seen briefly in Abbey Park on 17 October and one **Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum*** was nectaring on blue *Spiraea* in my Abney Road garden on 7 October and another on a house wall in Goodwood Road on 30 October.

Vespidae

Common Wasps, *Vespa vulgaris*, although quite scarce in the previous quarter, made some headway during October and were common around Ivy blossom in certain areas, at Ethel Road, Aylestone Meadows, Beatty Avenue, Abbey Park, Spinney Hill Park and Quorn during the month. **Hornets *Vespa crabro*** were only observed at Quorn around Ivy on the 6th and 30th of the month.



Lasioglossum Bee © Stephen Woodward

The only "solitaries" active this quarter were several of a ***Lasioglossum*** species of bee and the potter wasp ***Ancistrocerus parietum***, both in Hallaton on 14 October.

Howard Bradshaw and Helen Ikin

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

A very poor quarter for plants of any note but a lot of records of the commoner species which in the long run are just as important. Quite a few records were of plants still in flower very late into the quarter. One plant of interest is one which looks as if it is going to become a member of our local flora, **Fern-leaved Beggarticks *Bidens ferulifolia***, a cultivated composite which apparently can seed itself into cracks and crevices, in this case in the pavement. I believe the variety in cultivation is known as 'Solaire Yellow'.



Fern-leaved Beggarticks © Stephen Woodward

Plants of interest this quarter

Red Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra*: A colony growing on a tarmacadam road across the heath at Charnwood Lodge NNR is spreading as the road surface breaks up.

Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*: Hundreds of plants, some still in flower, are on sparsely vegetated ground at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel.

Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*: Several plants, some still in flower, were on the verge in Barkby Village.

Fern-leaved Beggarticks *Bidens ferulifolia*: Plants were growing in cracks in the pavement in Groby.

Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*: Approximately ten were in the plantation at Bosworth Park, Market Bosworth with several plants in seed.

Wood Small Reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*: Noted at Stonepit Field, Donisthorpe.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

We have also had records for Enchytraeid worms, Molluscs (including *Merdigera obscura*), Psocoptera, Galls, parasitic Hymenoptera, Millipedes, Scorpionflies, Woodlice, and Lichens, Fungi, and Bryophytes.

WEATHER

October was the coolest recorded in Leicestershire since 2003. Afternoon temperatures averaged 12.8°C about 0.5°C below normal while night time readings at Mountsorrel logged 5.6°C which was 1.2°C below normal. The overall mean was therefore 9.2°C - 0.8°C below what is usually expected for the month. Unlike many recent Octobers, there was no warm spell this month. The maximum temperature was just 16°C recorded on the 2nd and this the lowest for this month in my records. The lowest night time temperature was -0.1°C recorded on the 14th which made the first air frost of the year. Rainfall totalled 61 mm at Mountsorrel which is average for the month. The heaviest fall of rain I recorded was on the 17th when 11 mm was logged. Rain fell on 20 days of the month but a lot of this seemed to fall at night. As a result sunshine totals were slightly higher than normal at 120 hours nearly 10% up on the usual figure. The wind direction was variable throughout the month. It averaged a speed of four miles an hour but my maximum gust was on the 17th when I recorded 36 mph. The weather type was similar throughout the month with low pressure areas bringing periods of rain followed by sunshine and showers. The third week, however, was extremely dull and foggy and we saw no sunshine for five days between the 22nd and the 26th. So, no October heatwave this year.

November was extremely wet with temperatures and sunshine below normal. The month will be remembered for the intense rainfall that fell between the 21st and 27th. Total rainfall totals for Loughborough were 125 mm recorded at Jim Loft's station at Nanpantan. This was more rain than fell in November 2009 and is the wettest November he has recorded in the last 50 years. What was more remarkable was the intensity of rainfall between the 21st

and 27th. During this period, 93 mm fell on Loughborough. The ground was already saturated before the deluge began and as a result virtually all this rain ran straight into the water course system. The results were catastrophic flooding in virtually all the waterways in the region. Mountsorrel received 102 mm for the month and 75 mm in the six day period. The smaller waterways such as the Wood Brook and the Rothley Brook flooded immediately and the resultant floods were the worst seen in recent memory. Many properties that had never flooded before suffered for the first time in such extreme conditions. This water quickly transferred to the Soar catchment and the flooding here was the worst since the year 2000. Barrow upon Soar was virtually cut off as three of the four routes into the village were flooded as flood defences were breached. The flood water took more than a week to subside. Afternoon temperatures averaged 9°C, about average, with night time temperatures recorded at 2.8°C which is 0.5°C below normal. There were five air frosts recorded at Mountsorrel. Winds blew mainly from the west and reached a maximum gust of 44 mph at Mountsorrel on the 22nd and on the same day East Midlands Airport logged 55 mph. Some trees were felled in the gales and minor damage done to properties. Sunshine totals were slightly below normal for the month at 70 hours. The last day brought the coldest day with temperatures only reaching 2°C and the final night of the month saw temperatures tumbling to -4°C. At least the cold end to the month brought a temporary end to all the rain. So, an unsettled month with an extremely wet third week.

December was another extremely wet month. Nearly 150 mm of rain or six inches fell at Nanpantan at Jim Loft's station. I recorded 110 mm at Mountsorrel. Both of these figures were double the usual amount. Once again flooding was extensive in the Soar Valley catchment and for the second month running roads across the valley were impassable for nearly a week. Afternoon temperatures averaged 7°C and night time temperatures logged 2°C. These figures were around average for the month. However the first week of the month was cool and showery and snowflakes were observed on the 5th but did not settle. The second week was very cold as high pressure

settled down over the country and frost and fog became a problem. Visibility was down to less than 50 yards in places. Temperatures on the 13th only rose to -0.5°C and we call this an ice day, while at night they dropped to -5°C the coldest recorded figure for the month. The rain then returned and fell on most days for the remainder of the month. It then became very mild at the end of the month with 12°C recorded on the 29th. 70 hours of sunshine were recorded at Mountsorrel which is about average for December. Winds mainly blew from the west and gusted at a peak of 40 mph on the 31st.

Phil Morrish

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Records for the first quarter of 2013 should be sent to:

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by 15 April, please.