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## Natural History Museum, London

### Making use of the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity

Some members will recall our coach trip to the newly-opened Angela Marmont Centre (AMC) in 2007, kindly laid on by Tony and Angela Marmont. On 7 March 2015, HI and SFW returned, this time to seek help with specimen identification. This is one of the main functions of the centre (see [www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/centre-for-uk-biodiversity.html](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/centre-for-uk-biodiversity.html)), so we were interested to see how we got on.

To get there, we used a very convenient and inexpensive method – a day trip scheduled by Roberts Travel Group ([www.robertstravelgroup.co.uk](http://www.robertstravelgroup.co.uk)). We parked a car at their coach depot in Hugglescote and were then dropped off outside the South Kensington museums a couple of hours later.

We had a lovely, sunny day and the “cathedral to nature” looked superb. We expected the museum to be busy on a Saturday, but today there were no queues to get in. The Dinosaur Hall was a different

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Natural History Museum

matter, but we marched straight by the hordes of excited kids towards into the Darwin Centre, the new extension that houses the entomological collections, research facilities, the giant “cocoon” containing modern exhibits and, on the lower ground floor, the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity.

A simple sandwich and cuppa lunch cost nearly £20, but this is London!

The AMC contains reference collections and facilities for studying them, such a bench space and microscopes. We had reserved space and given

notice that we wanted to check particular species of bee, and to inquire about the possibility of identifying terrestrial mites. We were welcomed by Florin Feneru, who had already taken the relevant drawers of bees out of storage, ready for us to examine. We had brought with us a few Leicestershire specimens of bees that are not represented in our local collection at the Collections Resources Centre, Barrow upon Soar. We had provisionally keyed them out, but we needed to compare reference specimens with our own to check the identifications. This is standard practice in certain insect groups, where “picture books” do not exist (and would be of little use if they did). The Zeiss binocular microscope was a real joy to use. We quickly confirmed a few species and realised that we had misidentified one or two more. This was real progress!

Florin was keen for us to use his photographic gear, which is set up to make high resolution photographs of small objects such as insects. It uses “focus-stacking”, a method of stitching together several digital photos by means of clever software to produce a composite image. Having confirmed the identity of a male Social Wasp *Dolichovespula saxonica*, we decided to photograph it. The laptop computer took control of the camera and focus (after some initial reluctance) and in a few minutes we had the impressive result. We could even zoom in to the microtrichia (tiny hairs) on the wings.



*Dolichovespula saxonica* © Florin Feneru

The mite mission was less successful. We had done a little preparation, by asking our local Mite Co-ordinator (Ivan Pedley) for advice, also Sue Townsend of the Field Studies Council, searching for books and keys on the Internet and visiting the University of Leicester library. We realised that mites were going to be a challenge!



Working in AMC © Steve Woodward

We established that there was hardly anything published on how to identify the mites in the UK (i.e. those in leaf litter, on walls, etc.). They are very diverse, very small, and very difficult. The acarologist (mite specialist) at the museum had retired and there was no news about a replacement. The manager of the invertebrate collections at the Natural History Museum, Erica McAlister (whom we happened to meet a couple of days later) suggested that the answer was to get the DNA analysed. We were reassured to learn that our founder member and arachnologist extraordinaire, John Crocker, had also started to look at mites in 1966, but had abandoned them by 1967! (see LNC Annual Reports). We can probably take this no further, as amateur naturalists – mites are beyond us.

After a couple hours in AMC, we explored the Cocoon then paid homage to the Barrow upon Soar Ichthyosaur. We visited the centre of the earth then (inevitably) ended up spending more money in the museum shop. We will look out for future coach trips with a view to doing something similar again.

**Steve Woodward & Helen kin**

## CLASSIFIED RECORDS

The original records from which *Heritage* is compiled are archived at the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre, County Hall. They are freely available to members wishing to view record details. Non-members should apply to the Club Secretary for permission to consult them.

### MAMMALS

A **Hedgehog** was found by SFW squashed on Ratby Lane in Groby on 12 October.

**Molehills** were noted in churchyards in Stoke Dry, Bringhurst, Smeeton Westerby, Catthorpe, Swithland and Ashby Magna as well as in Swithland, Woodhouse Eaves Stockerston and Shawell villages.

There were no records for shrews or bats this quarter.

A **Brown Hare** was spotted by SFW in one of the wooded enclosures in Bradgate Park in late November. **Rabbits** were active in Swithland throughout the quarter, signs were seen in Bringhurst and Catthorpe churchyards and a dead one was found near a number of other dead mammals at Woodhouse Eaves.

**Grey Squirrel** were seen in Grace Dieu Wood and a dead one at Woodhouse Eaves.

The only vole sighting was a dead **Bank Vole** by a path in Bradgate Park. A **Wood Mouse** was responsible for eating a lot of garlic bulbs that MH had strung up at her Woodhouse Eaves home. **Brown Rats** were stealing and hoarding carrots from horse food in outbuildings at Woodhouse. A dead one was found near other dead animals, also at in Woodhouse parish.

A **Red Fox** was dead near the A46 at Anstey in early December and live ones were seen in Woodhouse Eaves garden – a beautiful specimen - and trotting along a track near Budgens at Mountsorrel in the middle of a December morning, PJD writes “a beautiful winter-coated fox, fabulous views of an animal at its peak condition”.

A **Stoat** ran across the road near Beaumanor Hall at Woodhouse on 11 October. DAP had good views of a large Mink in good condition working through his Swithland garden borders

at 2 pm one afternoon in mid-December. It later disappeared downstream in the brook.

There was a dead **Badger** on Joe Moore's Lane in early November and live ones throughout the quarter in Swithland and Woodhouse Eaves gardens and in a HS's Quorn garden where they dug up large sections of the lawn. In late October there was a dead sow Badger with a dead half-grown cub on the road verge near Roeclyffe not far from a dead Grey Squirrel, a dead Rabbit and a dead Brown Rat. What had happened here I do not know.

A dead **Muntjac** was beside the road on Warren Hill on 11 November. Unfortunately, I was in a hurry and could not stop to investigate and it had vanished when I returned later in the day. The rut of the **Red** and **Fallow Deer** in Bradgate did not seem as active or as prolonged as usual although there was the odd stag still roaring into December.

Helen Ikin

### BIRDS

There were quite a few herds of **Mute Swan** around the Charnwood reservoirs all of a similar number with the maximum count of 76 at Swithland Reservoir on 29 November. At the same site two weeks earlier there were 118 **Canada Geese** which was the only group of any size. Along with the swans were 170 **Greylag Geese**.

A **Shelduck** was found at Wanlip Meadows on 17 December.

Also at Swithland Reservoir on 14 October were 29 **Mandarins**. Large numbers of **Wigeon** were around Charnwood and the Soar Valley with 598 counted at Swithland Reservoir on 14 October. Four other sites had three-figure numbers. Six water bodies had double-figure counts of **Gadwall** with 79 at Cossington Meadows in mid-October. **Teal** numbers reached 221 at Swithland Reservoir in October with other sites registering almost one hundred birds. **Mallard** as usual were probably under reported but 172 at Cropston Reservoir in October was the highest count for a number of years. There were almost a hundred in Bradgate Park in November. A lone female **Pintail** was at Cossington Meadows on 18 October. **Shoveler**

in small numbers, were noted at Kelham Bridge, Groby Pool, Cossington Meadows and Swithland Reservoir where the highest number of 87 was seen in October.

A female **Red-crested Pochard** was at Cossington Meadows on 18 October. All **Pochard** records were from Swithland Reservoir with 63 on 13 December. There were only three reports of **Tufted Duck** and apart from 99 at Swithland Reservoir the others totalled four birds. A juvenile male **Scaup** was at Groby Pool on 26 October and probably the same bird at Swithland Reservoir on 15 December. **Goldeneyes** were only found at Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs and Groby Pool with a maximum of 20 birds. The one report of **Goosanders** was of at least 19 at Watermead Park on 17 December.

**Red-legged Partridges** were found in seven different locations with no more than seven at any site. No **Common Partridges** were mentioned. **Pheasants** were well spread, one site had 11 birds, the only one with a count of more than ten.

A Juvenile **Great Northern Diver** stayed at Swithland Reservoir for five days from 13 December.

**Cormorants** were at the two main reservoirs with 35 at Swithland Reservoir on 14 October. **Little Egrets** were seen at half a dozen sites but only in single figures. **Grey Herons** were less in evidence than the Egrets but were in the same areas and again only in single figures.



*Little Egret © Jim Graham*

**Little Grebes** were recorded in the usual stretches of water and three were still on the river in Bradgate Park on Christmas Day. Apart

from two at Cossington Meadows, all **Great Crested Grebes** were noted at Swithland or Cropston Reservoirs with similar numbers at each with a maximum of 48 at each in October.

All 12 of the **Red Kite** sightings were from the south of the county with 11 over Horninghold Lodge, Harborough on 5 December. Most of the **Sparrowhawks** seen were either in garden chases or near-misses with people or windows. **Buzzards** continue to be widespread and well seen. They were usually in ones or twos but nine were in the air over Cropston Reservoir on 22 October.



*Sparrowhawk © Jim Graham*

There does seem to be an increase in **Kestrel** sightings. They were the most reported raptor with double the number of Sparrowhawk observations and slightly more than Buzzards. **Peregrines** were only seen at the usual sites at Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs and Albert Village.

**Water Rails** were being secretive as they were only heard at Groby Pool and seen at Watermead Park. **Moorhens** were probably under recorded with no more than five sites mentioned. The same comment applies to **Coots** but Swithland Reservoir had 314 on 14 October and Cossington Meadows 122 four days later.

A poor autumn for **Golden Plover** produced only 45 birds at Stoughton Airfield in December and 50 at Wanlip Meadows in October. All **Lapwings** were noted in the Soar Valley with lots of counts in three figures, the maximum being 300 at Watermead Park on 20 November.

A **Dunlin** was at Cropston Reservoir on 19 October and a **Ruff** at Wanlip Meadows on 8 October.

No double-figure numbers of **Snipe** were found with seven being the maximum at both Kelham Bridge and Cropston Reservoir. Single **Woodcock** were flushed in Bradgate Park and Stoughton, both in November.

Single **Green Sandpipers** were at Kelham Bridge and Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs in October and there was one at the latter site in December.

**Black-headed Gulls** peaked at 237 at Cropston Reservoir on 19 October. The one **Common Gull** record was of three birds at the same site on 7 December. Also on 19 October there were 51 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Cropston together with ten **Herring Gulls**. An adult **Glaucous Gull** was at Albert Village Lake on 28 December.

On Boxing Day a thousand **Wood Pigeons** were noted at East Norton.

On 22 October a **Barn Owl** was seen in Bradgate Park where all but one of the few **Little Owl** records came from, the other being a garden in Cropston, all in December. **Tawny Owls** were much more common in comparison with all reports coming from Charnwood.

This quarter there were three times the number of **Kingfisher** records than the same period last year. They were seen at a dozen different sites all in Charnwood apart from a few sightings at Kelham Bridge.

All of the 20 **Green Woodpecker** observations were mostly from Charnwood with four in Bradgate Park on 6 November. Amazingly, there were fewer sightings of **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** than Greens this must surely be under recording as I thought most gardens had visits nowadays. Again there were no **Lessers** mentioned.

There were 20 **Magpies** at Birstall Meadows, eight **Jays** in Bradgate Park, 170 **Jackdaws** at Thurnby and 270 **Carrion Crows** at Houghton Lodge Farm. Most corvid records were of **Ravens** never more than two but all on Charnwood Forest.

Only two **Goldcrests** were reported, at Cropston Reservoir and Hugglescote. **Blue, Great and Coal Tits** entertained on the feeders in numerous gardens. As usual Kelham Bridge was the only site for **Willow Tits** but not as

reliable this quarter. **Marsh Tits** were only found at Groby Pool and Swithland Reservoir.

**Skylarks** were in short supply with six at Cropston and two at Albert Village, both late in the year.

The last and only Hirundine was a **House Martin** over Bradgate Park on 6 October.

**Long-tailed Tits** were well represented with up to 20 birds in some of the flocks.

**Chiffchaffs** were still calling at Groby and The Brand in early October but there were no winter observations. The only over-wintering **Blackcap** was a female in a Loughborough garden for a few days at the year's end.

In a very poor year for **Waxwings** the only report was of 15 over Groby on 17 December.

**Nuthatches** were scattered around Charnwood Forest with six seen at Ulverscroft on 3 December. Ulverscroft, Cropston Reservoir and a Loughborough garden were the only places where **Treecreepers** were found.

The days of large **Starling** flocks seem to have gone but 300 were seen in a pre-roost at Loughborough on November.



*Starlings © Jim Graham*

It was also a poor winter for **Fieldfares** and **Redwings**. The former did reach 120 at Blaston, Harborough on 9 November but this was the only place that numbers reached three figures. Two days earlier there were 50 **Redwings** at Cotes. The only number more than two was 30 at Hugglescote in December. The best number of **Mistle Thrushes** was four at two sites.

**Stonechats** seem to have had a better winter compared with the same period last year when there were none, they were seen at Albert

## REPTILES, AMPHIBIANS and FISH

As there was only one record sent in for this group, the report has been held over until the next quarter.

## DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

### Q3 July - September

Records of **Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*** came from six sites mainly in small numbers, with a maximum of seven at Buddon Brook Meadows on 21 July. There were no comments on mating or ovipositing during the period but males and females were noted at three sites.

**Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*** was found at just two sites, singles at Old John Watering in Bradgate Park on 20 July and Wileman's Pond Beacon Hill CP on 16 August. There were no records of **White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes***.

The only **Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula*** were at PHG's garden pond and a large pond in a Newtown Linford garden in July, the last record being on the 13th.

**Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*** were widespread and recorded in small numbers from seven sites in July and August but there were no comments on mating or ovipositing during the period. Recorded in all three months during the period, **Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*** was much more abundant with records from 15 widespread sites mostly in single figures. By contrast, **Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*** was seen at just three sites in small numbers the last being three at Puddledyke on 23 July.

There were no records for **Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum*** and the only one for **Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*** was a pair 'in cop' at a large garden pond in Newtown Linford.

Found in all three months of the quarter, **Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*** was observed in 11 diverse habitats in small numbers. The only note of ovipositing came from New Lount NR on 3 August. **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** was also noted throughout the quarter from seven

Village, Bradgate Park, Brascote Pits, where there were five on 1 October and Charnwood Lodge where seven were noted on 1 November.

All **House Sparrow** records came from Stonton Wyville. In a period of declining numbers it was good to hear of 100 there on 29 November and 200 one month later. To counter that there were no **Tree Sparrow** records.

**Grey Wagtails** were well reported but only from eight sites, these did include gardens at Quorn, Loughborough and Bushby. There were fewer records of **Pied Wagtails** and only one in double-figures, this was a group of 16 in a horse field at Donington-le-Heath on 30 October.

**Meadow Pipits** with a maximum of three birds were at Cossington Meadows, Bradgate Park and Charnwood Lodge, all in October.

Stonton Wyville produced the one decent **Chaffinch** flock with 200 on 29 December. Other groups hardly reached double-figures. Surprisingly, all **Greenfinches** were noted in gardens with the highest number 12 at Cropston in late December. There were numerous **Goldfinch** "charms". As well as garden visits around the area there were 65 at Albert Village Lake in late December. **Siskins** were few and far between and only seen at Bradgate Park. Newtown Linford, Ulverscroft and a Cropston garden, where there were six in November, the highest number reported. Flocks of **Linnets** were around Cropston Reservoir with 37 in December and Brascote Pits where there were 20 on the first day of the quarter. Apart from a few elsewhere the only **Lesser Redpoll** flock of note was at 60 in Bradgate Park on Christmas Day.

There was an unusually large group of eight **Bullfinches**, including five males at Cropston Reservoir on 8 December. However this was surpassed on Christmas Day with ten together including seven males at Dimminsdale car park.

A few **Yellowhammers** were around the Bradgate/Cropston area with 37 at Cropston on 1 November but there were 200 with the aforementioned Chaffinches at Stonton Wyville on 29 December. **Reed Buntings** were only noted at Cropston and Bradgate Park with no more than three birds.

Bas Forgham

## Yearly Report

2014 seemed to be a good year for grasshoppers in our area although possibly not quite so good for bush-crickets.

The usual five species of grasshopper were recorded. The “sewing machine” stridulation of ***Omocestus viridulus*** the **Common Green Grasshopper** was picked up in the usual places on Charnwood, however it does not seem to readily colonise new sites and is only found in permanent species-rich grassland.

***Chorthippus albomarginatus*** the **Lesser Marsh Grasshopper** is a good coloniser and is not fussy about habitat but seemed to be around in lesser numbers this year. Often, new colonisers are abundant in the first few years and then even off to a lower, more stable, population level in subsequent years. New sites include Bittesby, Welby and Acresford.

***Chorthippus parallelus*** the **Meadow Grasshopper** had a really good year and was recorded from Bloody Oaks Quarry, Burrough Hill, Bradgate Park, Asfordby Hill, Coombs Meadows, Ketton Quarry, Ratby Burroughs and Acresford among other sites. This species is a slow coloniser and has quite stringent habitat requirements in Leicestershire.

***Chorthippus brunneus*** **Field Grasshopper** was as common, as usual, in less well vegetated sites such as gardens, road verges and heathy grassland.

The little ***Myrmelleotettix maculatus*** **Mottled Grasshopper** seems to be thriving in its usual restricted sites and we did find it in parts of Bradgate where it had not been recorded before.



Speckled Bush-cricket © Steve Woodward

sites in small numbers. Ovipositing was noted at Wileman’s Pond Beacon Hill and in PHG’s Quorn garden. The latter site was also home to the first **Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*** on 18 July. By the end of the period records came from 12 sites, mainly single-figures but ten were along the River Soar near Barrow on 9 September, 12 were hunting in Bradgate Park on 1 August and circa 20 were in the area of Kaye’s Plantation Quorn on the 27th and 28th.

The only records of **Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*** were singletons at five sites, the last being at New Lount NR on 3 August.

Only three areas held **Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa***, all in July; two at Beacon Hill on the 12th, one at a Newtown Linford garden pond the following day and three at Old John Watering Bradgate Park on the 20th. There were no records received of **Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*** and the only **Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*** record came from Nature Alive on the 21st.

Small numbers of **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*** were noted at 12 widespread sites throughout the quarter, the only double-figure count being ten or more at Cossington Meadows on 3 September. There were no records of **Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*** during the quarter.

## Q4 October - December

As is usual, fourth-quarter records were much reduced and sightings were received for just four species during the period and none after 24 October.

The only records of **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** were from HS’s Quorn garden on 1 and 24 October. Single **Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*** were noted at four sites: Charnwood Lodge NR, PHG’s Quorn garden, Stoke Dry and Swithland Reservoir.

Small numbers of **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*** was found at six sites, the largest count noted being three at Watermead CP Reedbed NR on the 22nd whilst the only **Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*** noted was at Cropston Reservoir on the 12th.

Jim Graham

## BUTTERFLIES

The elusive, well camouflaged, *Leptophyes punctatissimum* **Speckled Bush-cricket** was only recorded from Cossington Meadows, Aylestone Meadows, Asfordby and Edith Weston and *Meconema thalassinum* the **Oak Bush-cricket** from Cotesbach, Mountsorrel, Edith Weston and Ketton.

The **Dark Bush-cricket** *Pholidoptera griseoptera* still persists in Owston Wood but the Speckled Bush-cricket, which used to occur with it, has not been recorded here in recent years.

The loud tones of *Metriopectera roeselli* **Roesel's Bush-cricket** were often heard from sites all over the county but *Conocephalus discolor* the **Long-winged Cone-head** seemed to be less frequent.



Long-winged Cone-head © Steve Woodward

**Common Groundhoppers** *Tetrix undulata* were noted at Watermead, Belgrave and Ashby and the **Slender Groundhopper** *Tetrix subulata* from about nine sites.

**Gryllus bimaculatus** **Southern Field Cricket**. A single specimen of this species was found in a factory in Ashby de la Zouch. It is commonly reared as a food for reptiles and is probably an escapee.

Records used for this report have come not only from LNC members but from records sent to NatureSpot and to LRERC.

Helen Ikin

Small numbers and in some cases single individuals of some nine species remained active into October and November: eight in October and just four species in November.

No **Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni* were noted by our members this autumn and only a single **Large White** *Pieris brassicae* and **Green-veined White** *Pieris napi* were both present in our Quorn garden on 3 October, the former nectaring on a Bowles Mauve Wallflower and the latter at rest on the rockery.

During early October single third generation **Small Copper** *Lycaena phlaeas* were active in the field on the south-east side of Swithland Wood and on the Cropston Reservoir dam and noted during our Wednesday morning walk on the 1st. On the 2nd, single specimens were also noted at Market Bosworth and in HS's Quorn garden. Later, two were seen on 5th by HI & SFW in Bradgate Park.

Up to three **Red Admirals** *Vanessa atalanta* were observed in some 14 widely spread localities during October, often nectaring on Ivy blossom. Several were also reported still active in November: one in a Rothley Garden on the 3rd, one sunning itself on an Ivy covered wall in Bradgate on the 5th, one nectaring on Winter Jasmine in a Quorn garden on the 12th and finally one was seen flying around inside St Bartholemew's church at Quorn during the morning service on the 23rd.

A late **Painted Lady** *Cynthia cardui* was present in HBH's Loughborough garden on 3 November.

During October the **Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae* was reported from five localities with last sightings on the 28th at St Mary's Mills in Leicester and in Swinford village.



Peacock © Steve Woodward

The **Peacock *Inachis io*** goes into hibernation early, usually in early September, but a few active individuals are frequently recorded in the autumn, sometimes doubtless after having been disturbed from their hibernating sites or waking early during unseasonably mild weather. This year individuals were seen in five localities in October and three localities in November. During October the **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** was seen at Market Bosworth on the 2nd and two were present on Ivy blossom at the Reedbed NR at Wanlip on the 22nd and even later one was noted at Wanlip on the 30 November, a particularly late date for this species.

Lastly, the **Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*** just made it into October with one near Puddledyke and two at Buddon Brook Meadows on the 1st.

Peter Gamble

## MOTHS

As expected, a very lean quarter for records this time, a stark contrast to the last one. It took five of us to reach a mere 55 individuals of 22 species. The majority of the records are made up from LP's garden in Rothley where he operates an Actinic light trap, without these, records would be very thin indeed.

The early feeding signs of ***Psyche casta*** and ***Luffia fercaultella*** were found in Bradgate Park in November. The spore-covered larval cases of ***Psychoides verhuella*** were at Grace Dieu Wood in October, where this seems to be the best site for this species. One of the host plants is Hartstongue Fern, which is in abundance here with most of the old quarries and spoil banks having a colony of this secretive species. The early feeding stages can be quite numerous here and a visit during its flight period of June and July ought to find many individuals sitting on the fern fronds. The leaf mines of **Horse Chestnut Leaf-miner *Cameraria ohridella*** were found at Lyddington, Ashby Magna and Bruntingthorpe, all in churchyards. The only records of **Light Brown Apple Moth *Epiphyas postvittana*** were of singles taken at an Actinic light in Rothley, a plume moth ***Amblyptilia acanthadactyla*** was at the same site. One of the nicest moths to see at

the end of the year is **December Moth *Poecilocampa populi***. Chunky, thick-set and covered with long fur-like hairs it is built for the winter, so if you do not put out the moth trap for this during the last quarter you will miss it. It was recorded from several sites although all in single figures. At the other end of the scale, build-wise, is **Red-green Carpet *Chloroclysta siterata*** a pretty mottled-green geometer with a hint of reddish scales but quite flimsy looking. Yet, this is on the wing until October and then hibernates ready for the early spring, this was also recorded from several sites.

**Juniper Carpet *Thera juniperata*** is still classed as quite a scarce species but there is a thought that it is adapting to other garden conifers. Recorded in good numbers from gardens in Rothley and Groby up until the beginning of November. Individuals of the **November Moth *Epirrita*** group are very difficult to separate and are best treated as an aggregate - the only records were from Rothley. **Winter Moth *Operophtera brumata*** was widespread with records from Rothley, Woodhouse and Wymondham Rough. **Feathered Thorn *Colotois pennaria*** was recorded on three occasions, all at Rothley, and a larva of **Pale Tussock *Calliteara pudibunda*** was found under oaks in Swithland Wood at the beginning of October. Late **Shuttle-shaped Dart *Agrotis puta*** and **Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba*** were really at the end of their flight period at Rothley in October.



Green-brindled Crescent © Graham Finch

**Green-brindled Crescent *Allophyas oxycanthae*** were recorded in singles at Rothley and Groby. The only **Lunar Underwing *Omphaloscelis lunosa*** came from Rothley at the beginning of October. Singletons of **Pale Mottled Willow *Caradrina clavipalpis*** and



Beautiful Hooktip © Graham Finch

Beautiful Hooktip *Laspeyria flexula* were also at Rothley, the latter is an extremely late appearance.

The permanent Actinic light at Bradgate Park was not operated this quarter due to vandalism, however the trap has been patched up and a new bulb provided and it is hoped to resume recording here in 2015.

Many thanks to our hardy recorders.

Graham and Anona Finch

## BETTER

For saying there have been just four of us active this quarter, this is quite a respectable result with a total of 1,119 individuals of 76 species from 31 sites. The total number of individuals will represent a minimum count as quantities are still reported as several and/or many or no count at all, the only thing I can do here is allocate an arbitrary count, so for a zero count will be given "1", several will be given "2" and for many I will give a count of 3. These will obviously give a very rudimentary minimum count and is totally unsuitable to base any scientific study on, but it does give us a minimum count, and that is better than nothing, although only just! Nevertheless we end up with an idea of how many species were recorded over this last quarter and the individuals involved and hopefully these figures give a perspective what has been accomplished.

As has been said previously, to find a few extra species additional tactics need to be employed and this has recently been the case. As well as our meadow and grassland reserves,

the rides and tracks of several of our other nature reserves are mown towards the end of the summer. Often resulting in piles of mown grass cuttings being left in odd corners around the reserves: these lowly looking heaps are little paradises for all manner of creatures, especially invertebrates. Some seem more productive than others and it takes some fathoming out which ones to sieve first, but once a "good one" is hit you soon end up with more than enough specimens to keep you occupied. This could be done in the garden, or even substituting grass cuttings with debris from a compost heap, it is worth a go.

As usual starting with the carabids, a single *Cychrus caraboides* was in a rotten log at Cloud Wood in November, whilst *Leistus spinibarbis* and *Leistus ferrugineus* were at Saddington Reservoir and Rutland Water respectively. *Nebria brevicollis* is one of the commonest species but there was just a single record of three individuals at Stonesby Quarry in mid-December. Five species of *Bembidion* were found - they were *B. biguttatum* from Wymondham Rough, *B. guttula* in Bradgate Park, *B. dentellum* at Saddington Reservoir, *B. lunatum* from the Wetland Reserve at Twycross Zoo, which is well worth an hour or two especially as it is free access, and finally *B. fumigatum* again at Saddington Reservoir.



*Stomis pumicatus* © Graham Finch

Although only 8 mm, *Stomis pumicatus* is equipped with a formidable set of jaws, at least as long as its head and a singleton was found by grubbing among the reeds at Cossington NR. Most of the *Pterostichus* species are classic black ground beetles and six different species were noted mostly from the Charnwood Forest and most under dead wood, bark or stones. *Calathus rotundicollis* was found in Bradgate Park and *Calathus melanocephalus* was at Pillings Lock, the latter species is quite striking with a blue-

black head and elytra and bright orange pronotum. A single *Oxypselaphus obscurus* was found at Saddington Reservoir but 30 were found at Cossington NR, all on the ground among reeds. Still considered to be uncommon, two *Batenus livens* were found under the bark of fallen trees at Saddington Reservoir. Three species of true *Agonum* were found, the best being a single *Agonum thoreyi* from Saddington Reservoir, only singles of *Platynus assimilis* from Rutland Water NR and Cloud Wood NR. A total of eight *Demetrius atricapillus* were beaten from standing dead Bracken in Swithland Wood and the closely related *Paradromius linearis* was found at Rutland Water NR and Cossington NR.

The Staphylinidae are impossible to ignore and 21 species were recorded this quarter a few were *Anthobium unicolor*, found at Charnwood Lodge NR and Swithland Wood. Fungi growing on a well-rotted pile of vegetation at Charnwood Lodge NR produced *Tachyporus chrysomelinus* and *Tachyporus dispar*. Sieving grass cuttings at Wymondham Rough NR produced *Tachyporus obtusus* and *Tachyporus hypnorum*. That same pile of rotting vegetation at Charnwood Lodge NR also produced *Tachinus humeralis*. Sieving soft rotting fungi at Bradgate Park and Swithland Wood produced *Lordithon trinotatus*. Just five species of *Stenus* were found this quarter, all from sieving an assortment of dead vegetation.

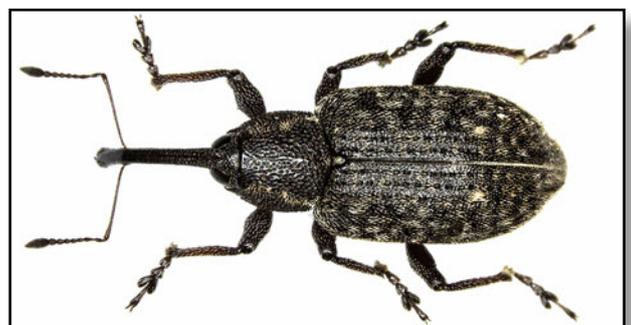


*Lordithon trinotatus* © Graham Finch

Moving from the staphs to the scarabs the *Minotaur Typhaeus typhoeus* was found on two occasions both in Bradgate Park. A serious effort was made to search for dung beetles and a nice selection were located. Out of the five species of *Aphodius* found, *Aphodius prodromus* was by far the most abundant with a total of over 600 found in sheep dung at Odstone. *Aphodius sphacelatus* and *Aphodius contaminateus* were the most widespread and what has previously been regarded as quite a scarce species

*Aphodius obliterated* has turned up on several occasions. Frank Clark and Tony Cook have been undertaking a survey of dung beetles at Priory Water and on just four occasions have recorded well over 100 individuals of this species. Several individuals of the “click” beetle *Ampedus cardinalis* were found at a private site at Castle Donington, where it was added to the county list in May and last reported in October. It is stated in the IUCN Red List as Near Threatened, entirely dependent on veteran trees where it inhabits the decaying heartwood. This being a very specific habitat type, highly fragmented and subject to continuing significant decline, just 15 isolated populations are known from modern records.

Three ladybird species were recorded with *Harlequin Ladybird Armonia axyridis* the most numerous and widespread but still in relatively small numbers, although a total of 70 were located in Quorn, settling on a sunlit brick wall. A total of five *7-spot Ladybirds Coccinella septempunctata* were recorded and the only other was of the habitat restricted *Water Ladybird Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata* found at Twycross Zoo Wetland Reserve and Cossington NR.



*Notaris scirpi* © Graham Finch

Just to finish off with a few weevils, found in the same habitat as the previous species and sometimes found together. *Notaris scirpi* is a large weevil and is most likely to be found between the layers of dead *Typha* stems, a singleton was found in this situation at the Wetland Reserve at Twycross Zoo.

*Sitona lineatus* must be one of the most widespread and abundant of the UK weevils. The host plants are Clovers and Vetches and they can be a pest of commercially grown leguminous plants. A single sweep of the net in mid-summer can produce dozens of individuals - the adults overwinter and can be found when



*Euopyhrum confine* © Graham Finch

searching for other species. A singleton was found between layers of dead *Typha* stems at Twycross. Finally, the strange looking, for a Weevil anyway, ***Euopyhrum confine*** was at Cossington NR.

Many thanks to all.

Graham Finch

## OTHER INSECTS

As usual, this is a very quiet quarter but we have a few records.

### Hemiptera

Just two records of the **Green Shieldbug *Palomina prasina*** were noted, one on low vegetation in Beatty Avenue, Leicester on 25 October and two adults in hibernating colours in low vegetation on Ethel Road in early November. The **Juniper Shieldbug *Cyphostethus tristriatus*** is quite a late maturing shieldbug and can be found usually on Lawson's Cypress and associated species in October. There were 20 or more on a single Lawson's Cypress in Spinney Hill Park on 10 October and adults with one nymph at Monks Rest, Scraftoft Lane at the end of the month.

Just two **Hawthorn Shieldbugs *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*** were noted, one adult at The Brand on 12 October and another at St Nicholas churchyard, Bringhurst on the 19th. Two **Birch Shieldbug *Elasmotethus interstinctus*** were seen on the very late date of 5 December in Whites Wood.

The other species in this group was the little Rhopalid bug ***Rhopalus subrufus***, in October single adults in hibernating colours were swept from Lawson's Cypress at Spinney Hill Park on 10th, in Chapel Lane, Knighton on 27th and at

Monks Rest, Scraftoft Lane on 31st. Whether or not they were feeding on the fruits or just using this tree for hibernating purposes is difficult to say. The attractive red and black ***Corizus hyoscyami***, also a member of this group, has been showing up more recently in the county, one was swept from Lawson's Cypress at Monks Rest on 31 October.

A single Rhododendron Leafhopper ***Graphocephala fennahi*** was recorded from The Brand on 12 October – LRWT Charnwood Group Open Day on 12 October and five were recorded at Charnwood Lodge NR, Collier Hill on 9 November.

A single Froghopper ***Aphrophora alni*** was seen at Dadlington in mid-October. Other records for this group were the **Birch Catkin Bug *Kleidocerys resedae*** at Bradgate Park, where several nymphs with adults were present on 17 October, and the **Beech Felt Scale *Cryptococcus fagisuga*** - many on a Beech trunk in Thornton churchyard in mid-December.

### Diptera

Almost all hoverfly records received this quarter relate to specimens on Ivy. The importance of this much maligned plant cannot be overstated for autumn stragglers, a better appreciation of the merits of Ivy can be found in the 2013 *Heritage* article by PH Gamble. All present on Ivy unless otherwise stated.

Continuing the very poor summer for this group, the following were recorded this quarter; ***Syrphus ribesii*** in Beatty Avenue and Ethel Road. ***Syrphus vitripennis*** on Great Central Way and Aylestone and Beatty Avenue. ***Episyrphus balteatus*** again on Beatty Avenue and at The Brand, ***Eupeodes luniger*** on Great Central Way and Beatty Avenue. ***Eristalis tenax*** was more widely recorded – common on Great Central Way and Beatty Avenue with singles at Lyddington and Stoke Dry. A few more ***Eristalis pertinax*** were found at Stoke Dry, Little Bowden, Whitwick and Market Bosworth in early October, with PHG recording several still visiting his Quorn garden on 30 October. Just a single record of ***Eristalis arbustorum*** from Beatty Avenue in Leicester on 25 October. The only other hoverfly recorded this quarter was ***Helophilus pendulus*** - two very small specimens

on Great Central Way and several present in a Quorn garden.

The common fly *Mesembrina meridiana* was widely noted in October with records from Great Central Way, Wanlip Meadows NR, Great Easton churchyard, Swinford, All Saints churchyard, with records in November from Ashby Magna on the 3rd and the final one from Charnwood Lodge NR on the 9th.

Leaf mines in Holly, made by the fly *Phytomyza ilicis*, were recorded in October from Swithland Wood, Smeeton Westerby, Little Bowden and Ashby Magna churchyard on Nov 3rd. And finally, mines in fern leaves made by a small greyish fly *Chirosia grossicauda* were recorded at The Brand on 12 October.

## Hymenoptera

There was little activity this quarter, as expected. An article concerning the mass poisoning of over 500 bumblebee queens at a site in London this spring, were found by the government's Food and Environment Agency to be mainly contaminated with high levels of the neonicotinoid imidacloprid a partially banned insecticide and by two types of fungicide. Neonicotinoids are harmful to whole ecosystems and can build up in soils for months, perhaps years. A depressing article indeed.

A few **Buff-tailed Bumblebees**, *Bombus terrestris* were reported, a worker was seen briefly at Beatty Avenue on 25 October, at Chapel Lane, Knighton two workers were observed in MF's garden in early December foraging on Ivy and the only other worker reported was from PHG's garden at Quorn where a queen and a worker were recorded from 12th November to the end of December. The only other queens recorded were from Barlestone with single queens on October 10th and 22nd and November 3rd, and 10th.

Just a single queen **White-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus lucorum* was noted at Barlestone on November 4th on Winter Jasmine. Again, the **Red-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus lapidarius*, just a single queen this quarter at Catthorpe, St Thomas churchyard on 28 October.

**Tree Bumblebees** *Bombus hypnorum* were seen at Market Bosworth on 2 October, at Smeeton Westerby churchyard on the 26th,



*Bombus lapidarius* © Steve Woodward

with two queens on 1 November at Sandalwood Road, Loughborough, where EPT informs me they successfully nested in an airbrick in 2013, clearly this species has adapted well to urban habitats and in some gardens has become the most common species.

**Common Carder Bees** *Bombus pascuorum* were the most widely recorded bumblebee this quarter with records from Market Bosworth, Lyddington, The Brand, Dadlington churchyard, Great Central Way, with several throughout the month of October from Barlestone and Quorn gardens. Few Hive bees *Apis mellifera* were about this quarter but were seen at Stoke Dry, Bringhurst cemetery, with a number still present on Ivy at Meeting Street, Quorn on 30 October and one visiting winter-flowering Honeysuckle on 19 November.

## Social Wasps

**Common Wasps** *Vespa vulgaris* were still evident on Ivy in urban habitats. Noted at Stoke Dry, Bradgate Park, Catthorpe St Thomas' churchyard, Spinney Hill Park - three queens among leaf litter on 10 October, common on Ivy in Beatty Avenue, Great Central Way, Aylestone and Meeting Street in Quorn in late October, with the last record from Beatty Avenue - still common on 3 November. Single **German Wasps** *Vespa germanica* were recorded from Market Bosworth, North Kilworth and Smeeton Westerby in October. The only records of **Hornet** *Vespa crabro* were singles at Swithland and the Hallgates end of Bradgate on 1 October.

Howard Bradshaw

## Solitary Bees in 2014

We have had to work harder to record solitary bees this year – numbers were unusually low and this may be a result of 2013's wet summer which must have affected the nest sites of mining bees, although some species make cell linings that can resist occasional inundations.

### Colletinae

*Colletes daviesanus* is never common and was only recorded from Donington le Heath, Shenton and South Kilworth.



*Colletes succinctus* © Steve Woodward

This year, for the first time, we had the heather specialist *Colletes succinctus* at Beacon Hill on the extensive patch of heather above the top car park. The Ivy Bee *Colletes hederæ* is moving north so keep an eye open for that – a late bee with very prominent yellow abdominal stripes often, as its name implies, feeding on Ivy.

The little *Hylaeus* bees have no pollen-carrying hairs as they transport pollen in their stomachs. We had two species, the fairly common *Hylaeus communis* at four sites and *Hylaeus hyalinatus* at Groby and Newtown Linford.

### Andreninae

Three sightings of *Andrena angustior* from Bradgate, Woodhouse and Beacon Hill summit. *Andrena barbibris* is not a common bee in Leicestershire and we only found it at Brascote Pits. *Andrena bicolor* on the other hand, was more common than usual this year and we had records from 12 widespread sites. *Andrena carantonica* was widely recorded as usual but was not found in some traditional sites. Numbers were quite good. There is a colony near my house at Woodhouse and I have to keep shooing them out of the kitchen. On looking at

the records of *Andrena chrysoceles*, I realise that only two of the sites were in Charnwood and the remaining sites were on the eastern side of the counties, including HB's garden in Leicester. *Andrena cineraria* is one of the commoner solitary bees and easily recognisable. Numbers were lower than usual but it was still widespread. *Andrena clarkella* is a very early bee with particular nesting requirements and was definitely scarcer this spring. We found some at Bradgate, Hill Hole and Croft Pasture. GC came up with a male *Andrena dorsata* at Sapcote - only a fourth county record, the first two being in 1919 at Peckleton Common and Swithland Wood and we had another at Ulverscroft in 2012.



*Andrena fulva* © Steve Woodward

*Andrena fulva*, the Tawny Mining Bee usually so common on our lawns, was widespread but in lesser numbers than usual. Similarly *Andrena haemorrhoea*, another usually common bee, was frequently seen but in lower numbers. *Andrena helvola* was found only at Mill House Farm, Ulverscroft where there are some very good dead trees. Specimens of *Andrena labiata* were again found at Croft, Mountsorrel and at Welham. This is another very obvious species as both sexes have red on the gaster. *Andrena nigroaenea* was much reduced in some of its usual strongholds but was recorded from 16 sites. *Andrena nitida*, never a common bee, was seen only at Burley Wood and Bloody Oaks Quarry NR. The tiny *Andrena minutula* was found only at Hill Hole. *Andrena ovatula* was again found in Bradgate and *Andrena praecox* turned up at Swithland Wood meadow and on a wall at Geeston. Another "small black job" - *Andrena subopaca* was recorded from several sites. *Andrena synadelpha* another non-descript bee was only taken from two areas of Bradgate

Park. ***Andrena tarsata*** several specimens of this species, which is new to the county, were found at Bradgate in the second half of June, feeding on Tormentil and on a yellow composite. This a very recognisable species as it has a three toothed mandible, however, we had it checked by Mike Edwards who confirmed our diagnosis. ***Andrena wilkella*** was only found in Bradgate.

## Halictinae

As usual the two *Halictus* species recorded were ***Halictus rubicundus*** and ***Halictus tumulorum***.

***Lasioglossum morio*** was by far the commonest of the nine species of *Lasioglossum* that we found. The others were ***L. albipes***, ***L. calceatum***, ***L. fratellum***, ***L. fulvicorne***, ***L. leucopus***, ***L. rufitarse***, ***L. smeathmanellum*** and ***L. villosulum***. We are getting better at identifying *Lasioglossums* but it is still hard work.

The little red ***Sphecodes*** species are kleptoparasites of *Lasioglossum* and *Halictus* species. They are particularly challenging to identify and need to be checked by an expert so are not listed here.

## Megachilinae

**Wool-carder Bee *Anthidium manicatum*** is more common in gardens than in the wild areas. There are probably more hairy plants in gardens suitable for stripping to make nest linings. Do watch for it in your garden – as large bee with a black abdomen spotted with yellow. It would be interesting to hear of nesting sites. It is territorial and will chase off other bees.



*Anthidium manicatum* © Steve Woodward

***Chelostoma florissomne*** the **Sleepy Carpenter Bee** was found at its usual tree in Bradgate and at Ulverscroft NR. After intensive searching, we were thrilled to find the tiny **Harebell Carpenter Bee *Chelostoma campanularum*** in my

Woodhouse garden, in PHG's Quorn garden and on the "kipper" roundabout at Barrow upon Soar. As its name implies, it feeds upon *Campanula* species but despite examining hundreds of Harebells in Bradgate we failed to find it there.

The **Blue Mason Bee *Osmia caerulea*** was recorded at Welby and Quorn and *Osmia rufa*, which is now called ***Osmia bicornis*** **Red Mason Bee**, and is probably our commonest mason bee was recorded from several sites throughout the county. There are always more records of this species as it is so easy to identify.

**The Snail Thatcher *Osmia bicolor***, which nests in snail shells, is restricted to Rutland, as far as we know, and was seen at Ketton Quarry and Bloody Oaks Quarry. The challenge is to get a good photograph of it carrying grass stems to cover its snail shell nest.

The Bee Henge in Bradgate Park (see photo below) was, this summer, raided by Great Spotted Woodpeckers and the larvae eaten. The keepers have moved some of the logs to a new site and we are hoping the woodpeckers will not find them. Garden bee hotels often have to be protected by wire netting from woodpeckers.

***Megachile centuncularis***, a leaf-cutter bee, was the species that provided the woodpeckers' food. We are compiling a list of plants that leaf-cutter bees use to line their cells so if you find any plants in your garden with large roundish holes in the leaves do make a note of which species it is and take a photo if possible. So far Rose leaves are favourite but also Alder Buckthorn, Epimedium and Exochorda.



Photographing *Megachile* © Steve Woodward

We also had records of the other leaf-cutters - ***Megachile ligniseca***, ***Megachile versicolor*** and

**Megachile willughbiella** from a number of sites including Aylestone Meadows, Castle Gardens in Leicester, HB's garden in Abney Street, Donington le Heath, Ketton, Asfordby Hill and Bradgate.

## Apinae

In some years the cuckoo bees seem more numerous than their hosts – this state of affairs naturally evens itself out in subsequent years. This year was not a bumper year, although there seemed to be **Nomada lathburiana** everywhere.

Species recorded were: **Nomada fabriciana**, **N. flava**, **N. flavoguttata**, **N. goodeniana**, **N. leucophthalma**, **N. marshamella**, **N. panzeri**, **N. ruficornis** and **N. rufipes**.

**Anthophora plumipes** the **Hairy-footed Flower Bee** is easily recognised by the male's 'hairy' legs so tends to be recorded more. Records came from all over the two counties. This is one of the species that can be found nesting in church walls. Its cuckoo, **Melecta albifrons**, is also very distinctive – white spots on a black abdomen and has been seen at six sites. **A. plumipes** was absent from a regular nesting site in Desford.

We are grateful to Mike Edwards, Ian Cheeseborough, Matt Smith and other members of BWARS for confirming (or not) our identifications of species new to us.

We are always happy to visit member's gardens if they have any interesting bees around.

Helen Ikin

## Solitary Wasps

The report will appear in the next *Heritage*.

### FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

There are very few records this quarter, although due to the very warm autumn we could have had a lot of late flowering records - **Red Campion** **Silene dioica** was still in flower after Christmas.

On the subject of warm autumns, I came across a newspaper article recently which dealt with the effect of warmer autumns. In 1736 a man named Robert Marsham began recording the first signs of spring, particularly plants but

also the first butterflies, migrating birds and much more. He carried this on for 61 years. This work was carried on by his descendants until 1958 - the longest phenology record in Britain. Phenology is the science of natural events, a science which Marsham's work established. A study of Marsham's work, plus recent records, reveal a subtle difference between different types of trees. Although warmer spring-times spurred on most trees and plants to leaf and flower earlier, warm autumns delay some trees from coming into leaf the following spring. Usually the hawthorn and Silver Birch come into leaf early but warmer autumns are delaying them, whilst trees such as oaks appear unaffected. According to a report, oaks could soon overtake the hawthorn and birch in spring-time, that means some woodland plants and trees could suffer as they struggle to find light under trees which are already in full leaf.

## Plants of Interest

**Navelwort** **Umbilicus rupestris**: Still present in Swithland Churchyard.

**Pencilled Cranesbill** **Geranium versicolor**: A beautiful introduction, which is quite common in the south-west of England, and a lovely addition to our hedgerows if it could persist and increase. Found in Little Bowden churchyard.

**Yellow-wort** **Blackstonia perfoliata**: Many specimens still persisting in the Mountsorrel area.

**Saw-wort** **Serratula tinctoria**: Seven distinctive dead heads were located in Lea Meadows NR.

**Mexican Fleabane** **Erigeron karvinskianus**: A naturalised escape, much commoner further south particularly the south-west. I first saw it as an escape in Cornwall in the early '60s. Ten were found on top of Bringhurst churchyard wall.

Eric Webster

### OTHER RECORDS

Records were also received for:

Slugs, snails, galls, barkflies, stoneflies, earwigs, ants, springtails, millipedes, centipedes, harvestmen, woodlice, pseudoscorpions, mosses, liverworts, fungi, lichens and slime moulds.

## WEATHER

It was the mildest October in our region since 2011 and was the fourth October in the last nine years to record temperatures more than 2°C above normal. Afternoon temperatures averaged 15.5°C which was 2°C above normal while night time temperatures were logged at 9.5°C or 2.6°C above the norm. The overall mean of 12.6°C was 2.3°C above the expected figure. The warmth was brought by prevailing wind from the west and south-west. Indeed, it blew from these directions for 26 days in the month. They brought with it a very mild air mass which was on occasion extremely warm and it was sourced, on many days, from the Azores region. The down side was the amount of cloud that it often brought and there were only 80 hours of sun recorded which is 75% of the usual total. Along with the mild, humid air mass, came a lot of rain. Jim Lofts at Nanpantan recorded 98.7 mm of rain, nearly 50% above normal and at Mountsorrel I logged 80 mm, 20% above my usual figure. Low pressure areas dominated in October after the almost constant high pressure in September but they were often positioned in mid-Atlantic maintaining the feed of mild south-westerly winds. The month began dry and Jim recorded his warmest day of the month on the 1st at 21°C. The long September drought was broken on the 4th as the first heavy rain for more than five weeks arrived. Cooler air briefly returned and, on the 5th, Jim recorded his lowest night time temperature of 2°C and then again on the 12th. The 10th provided us with our sunniest day, with nine hours being recorded. Very heavy rain arrived on the 13th with 23.5 mm falling at both sites and winds gusted up to 35 mph. Temperatures recovered both by day and night. The 18th saw a remarkably mild night with a minimum temp of 15°C during the night which was higher than the usual afternoon figure for October! The 21st saw an ex-hurricane arrive at our shores with winds gusting to 40 mph. The end of the month saw some spooky temperatures on the 31st when my maximum temperature reached 20°C more than 7°C above the late October average! So, a very mild but wet month and we still await our first air frost of the season. So far this year, every month bar August has been milder than average and I know many local stores are hoping for

colder weather so they can shift some of their winter stock!

November was another very mild and wet month. Afternoon temperatures averaged 10.8°C, which is 1.5°C above normal. The minimum temperature mean of 5.4°C was also 1.5°C above the expected total giving us a monthly mean of 8.1°C. This made it the warmest November since 2011 but, more significantly, these figures, combined with the warm September and October, made it the third warmest autumn ever recorded. There was very little air frost with just three nights having one. As with October, it was very wet. Jim Lofts at Nanpantan recorded 101 mm of rain in November which was 40% above normal with my Mountsorrel total of 82 mm being 25% above average. The, frequently, cloudy skies during the month resulted in only 68 hours of sunshine which was 10% below the normal figure.

The month was mostly dominated by low pressure with westerly winds for the majority of the time with no significant interludes of high pressure. The month began on a mild note and the warmest day was recorded on the 1st with 16.5°C being logged by Jim in Loughborough. This day also gave us the sunniest spells with seven hours being observed. The 6th provided us with our first air frost since April but, after this, it was rain which dominated the next three weeks. Rain was recorded on 23 days. The 7th was the wettest day at Mountsorrel with 18 mm being recorded while Jim had 14 mm on the 16th. The last week did see a change in the weather type as the winds fell light. This resulted in a series of misty and foggy days and also colder nights. The 25th saw temperatures fall to 3.5°C in Loughborough, making it the coldest night since March. The fog was dense at times with visibility down to 50 yards in places. After a dry September, October and November made up the shortfall and the total of 200 mm for the season was about average. So the meteorological winter is now upon us. Statistically it is not likely to be as mild as the last one and the first week is certainly going to be cooler than we have come to expect but there is no sign yet of any significant cold!

December was a dog's dinner month in terms of weather, having both cold and warmth

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Heritage* was compiled from records sent in by:

H Bradshaw, G Calow, B Croxtall, P J Darby, M A Finch, G L Finch, D B Forgham, P H Gamble, J Graham, S Graham, M Hall, H B Hope, H Ikin, A T Onions, G C Panter, D A Perry, F C Pickering, L W Purnell, H Shacklock, F T Smith, E P Tromans, E Webster, S F Woodward and records from NatureSpot and from the Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre.

We are grateful to them all.

Records for the first quarter of 2015 should be sent by 20 April 2015 to:

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

email: [helen@canids.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:helen@canids.freeserve.co.uk)

and rain but also with record amounts of sunshine! At the finish, average afternoon temperatures registered 8.2°C which is 1.5°C higher than normal with night time values being logged at 2.5°C, 0.5°C above normal. Having said this there were 11 night frosts recorded at Jim's station in Nanpantan. The overall mean of 5.3°C was 1.2°C above. Rainfall for the month was broadly average. Jim recorded 69.3 mm and, in Mountsorrel, I logged 56 mm. The amount of sunshine was the main weather story for December. Nearly 99 hours of sunshine was recorded which is almost 60% above normal. It has been the sunniest December in Leicestershire since records started in 1896! Much of this was due to a very sunny and cold last week that recorded 30 hours of sunshine in one week. Winds were variable right through the month and they blew from all directions. The maximum gust was 38 mph on the 9th. Low pressure dominated most of the month with winds from a westerly direction but after Boxing Day a cold high pressure established itself to end the of the year.

The first week of the month was mainly dry with average temperatures. It became much wetter in the second week and the third week was very mild. Both Jim and I recorded our maximum temperature of the month on the 18th when we both registered 14°C which is double the expected January daytime temperature. The weather did change dramatically in the last week of the month when a band of rain spread in on Boxing Day evening. This quickly turned to heavy wet snow and this quickly accumulated. Most places recorded 5 cm but up in the hills around Nanpantan up to 12 cm fell. This caused considerable problems to begin with but the main roads were quickly cleared. A cold high pressure area then moved down from the north and provided us with plenty of winter sunshine but cold crisp days too as well as severe frosts. The coldest day of the month was the 28th when temperatures struggled to 2°C and the coldest night was the 30th when temperatures dropped to -5°C over the Loughborough snow fields!

**Phil Morrish**