



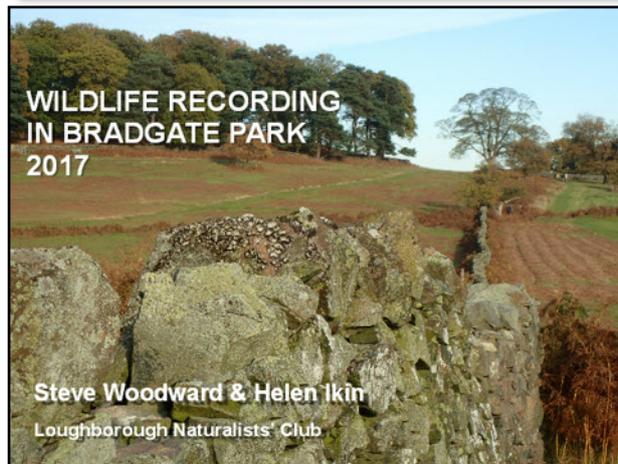
No. 228

1 October - 31 December 2017

Editorial Panel: Helen Ikin, Steve Woodward, Jim Graham.

Hon. Secretary: Sue Graham, 5 Lychgate Close, Cropston, Leics. LE7 7HU (0116-2366474)

## WILDLIFE RECORDING IN BRADGATE PARK



Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin recently completed a report on some of the wildlife for the Bradgate Park Trust. We thought that you too would be interested in the results.

We hope you enjoy it.

### Scope

This report covers a selection of the flora and fauna observations made by local naturalists Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin, who visit frequently (and have been doing so for more than 50 years). Our aim is to add to existing knowledge, so we have concentrated on new or unusual species, population changes and animal behaviour. We do not attempt to record everything in all years. The full 2017 list is available on a spreadsheet and records from past years are accessible elsewhere (see below).

### Validation and Record Handling

With a century of local recording experience behind us, we know when an identification is likely to be questioned and needs to be checked or backed up by a specimen or photo. We are grateful for permission from the Bradgate Park Trust and Natural England to take specimens for this purpose. All our records are submitted for validation by Vice County or National Recorders.

Our records are first entered into SFW's database (called *Observant*), which helps to maintain data quality by eliminating the most likely errors. Once we are satisfied that identifications and other details are correct, we send our records to the Bradgate Park Trust, Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre (where they are available to public) and the relevant national recording schemes.

### IN THIS EDITION

#### CLASSIFIED RECORDS

- Mammals Page 6
- Birds Page 7
- Reptiles and Amphibians Page 10
- Fish including Crayfish Page 10
- Butterflies Page 12
- Moths Page 13
- Beetles Page 15
- Other Insects Page 17
- Plants and Ferns Page 18
- Other Records Page 18
- Weather Page 18
- Acknowledgements Page 19

## Lichens

Lichens are an important aspect of the park's flora, particularly on the outcrops and stone walls. They grow very slowly, so it takes hundreds of years for lichen communities to develop. At Bradgate Park they have enjoyed minimal disturbance and freedom from shading, so unusually mature communities occur, along with some scarce species. In addition to their intrinsic value, lichens are pleasing to the eye, softening the harsh rock surfaces, and sheltering small invertebrates. We are grateful to lichen specialist Ivan Pedley for identifying some of our finds and for showing us others that we had overlooked.



Lichen *Lasallia pustulata* has discs that are free around the edge but fixed to the wall in the centre. Its only stronghold in the Midlands is Charnwood Forest. © Steve Woodward

*Lasallia pustulata* is a robust lichen, big enough to have earned an English name: Rock Tripe. It has long been known from the park, and seems to be doing well. It is most abundant on the sloping rocks at Sliding Stones (SK532111), where we watched Fallow Deer nibbling it near last winter. It has colonised the dividing wall, from which it was reported as absent by Laundon (1980).

Some large, light grey, fuzzy lichens on top of the dividing wall near Newtown Linford looked unfamiliar to us, they resembled cumulus clouds. Ivan sent on a specimen to the national specialist, Steve Chambers, who confirmed the identity as *Stereocaulon vesuvianum* var. *vesuvianum*. The scientific name was evidently



The somewhat nebulous lichen *Stereocaulon vesuvianum*. © Steve Woodward

inspired by plumes of smoke from a volcano (see [www.lichens.lastdragon.org/Stereocaulon\\_vesuvianum.html](http://www.lichens.lastdragon.org/Stereocaulon_vesuvianum.html)). It appears to be a first park record (and for Charnwood Forest), although there are handful of Leicestershire records and it is not rare nationally.

## Mosses

The moss *Pleurozium schreberi* is scarce in the county. It likes dryer, acid grassland.



The moss *Pleurozium schreberi* has red stems when moist. © Steve Woodward

In a boggy bit of ground above the covered reservoir, we found a tiny moss *Philonotis fontana*. Typically (in western Britain), it grows much bigger, so we had our 10 mm tall specimen checked by Tom Blockeel. There are a few old Leics records but only one or two recent ones.

## Flowering Plants

On the basis of the stalkless acorns, and leaves lacking auricles, we identified a pollard (label number 1210) as Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea*. No doubt there are more, the species is common in Charnwood. We mention them because the Parkland Tree Survey for Bradgate overlooked them, assigning all the pollards to “English Oak” (*Q. robur*). That survey was done in February and March 2014 when neither leaves nor acorns would have been evident.



Monkey-flower *Mimulus guttatus* agg.  
© Steve Woodward

Monkeyflower *Mimulus guttatus* agg. flowered alongside the R. Lin at Newtown Linford (we saw only leaves last year). It is a garden escape that seems to be spreading. The same is true of the sedge Pale Galingale *Cyperus eragrostis* which appeared briefly in November just above the bridge at the Newtown Linford car park, then disappeared. Neither of these is of much conservation significance (good or bad) but the alien Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* is becoming commoner along the river – if left unchecked it can become dominant and ought to be controlled. Pulling out his plant by hand is effective and popular with volunteers.



Pale Galingale *Cyperus eragrostis*, presumed to have escaped from a garden. © Steve Woodward

The aquatic grass Orange Foxtail *Alopecurus aequalis* appeared in a pond in the ruins enclosure. It is Scarce in the county Rare Plant Register, a plant of lake margins and marshes.



The grass Orange Foxtail *Alopecurus aequalis* growing above Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis*.  
© Steve Woodward

Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* is rare in Leics, but locally plentiful in Bradgate Park. Its penny-shaped leaves are easy to identify, but few people have seen its flowers. Most plants in the carrot family hold their flowers aloft in an umbel, but this one hides its tiny inflorescences under the leaves. A hands-and-knees search for the flowers this year was successful.



Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* with flowers.  
© Steve Woodward

Eyebright *Euphrasia* put up about ten shoots near Hallgates, unfortunately we could not identify the species. Numerous shoots need to be picked and examined closely to arrive at an ID, and the Bradgate population is too small.

Bradgate is a refuge for several rare plants, whose future in Leicestershire is uncertain. As a precaution against local extinction, seeds of our rarest plants are being gathered for a deep-freeze seed bank. The project is called Genebank55 and is run by the University of Leicester in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust. On 24 August, with all necessary permissions, we helped Richard Gornall and Anna Farrell from project to find seeds of: Trailing St. John's-wort *Hypericum humifusum*, Star Sedge *Carex echinata*, Water-purslane *Lythrum portula*, Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis*, Ploughman's Spikenard *Inula conyzae*, Deadly Nightshade *Atropa bella-donna* and Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger*.



Anna Farrell & Richard Gornall collecting seeds of Trailing St. John's-wort *Hypericum humifusum* for Genebank55.



Ploughman's Spikenard *Inula conyzae* near the old watermill. © Steve Woodward

### Reptiles and Amphibians

We saw no Adders this year, despite looking in the usual places in good conditions. We made three Slow-worm and two Lizard records.

### Mammals

Badger watching at a large sett near Newtown Linford on 9 May produced a poor sighting of just one Badger, before darkness fell.

We saw two Rabbits but no Brown Hares this year.

A Grey Squirrel sighting on 2 June was unusual, in that the animal was swimming across the River Lin.

### Birds

We do not generally look for birds (as other more skilled people are doing so) but we will mention a few encounters.

Cuckoos were heard twice only, on 8 May and 16 June.



A tame Raven entertained visitors in autumn.  
© Steve Woodward

During a fungus foray on 5 October, a large black bird waddled up to us to see what we were doing - a Raven. Unlike their smaller Jackdaw cousins, Ravens are normally shy and we have never observed such behaviour before in the park. This individual was not frightened by dogs and was begging from visitors.

### Bees and Wasps

Our special interest is bees and wasps, but in 2017 they seemed generally scarce (as elsewhere) and we have not found anything new or significant. One of the commonest species, the Tawny Mining Bee *Andrena fulva* did seem to be particularly abundant on 3 April, many hundreds making their nests in the footpath along the ridge above Little Matlock. The Ashy Mining Bee *Andrena cineraria* was also common, and easy to identify. *Andrena clarkella*, which was abundant in Stable Pit Quarry until a couple of years ago, was seen in low numbers. We did re-find the Tormentil Bee *Andrena tarsata*, first detected in 2014 - unfortunately the individual was camera-shy and we are still unable to illustrate this rare bee.



*Andrena cineraria* mating pair on footpath. Females nest individually in the ground, so they are known as solitary bees. © Steve Woodward

The solitary wasps *Cerceris arenaria* and *C. rybyensis*, recent colonists in Leics, can still be found on the path between Coppice Plantation and the quarry.

### Other invertebrates

The Ant Woodlouse *Platyarthrus hoffmanseggii* turned up again inside an ants' nest in the ruins enclosure. This small, blind animal is a scavenger that is tolerated by the ants.

A harvestmen of the common species *Phalangium opilio* posed for a photograph.



Ant Woodlouse *Platyarthrus hoffmanseggii* will only be found by those who grub about in ant nests. © Steve Woodward



Harvestman *Phalangium opilio*. © Steve Woodward

The Barkfly *Peripsocus milleri* is probably a new Park record, although we suspect that no-one but ourselves had been studying that group.

© Loughborough Naturalists' Club March 2018

## CLASSIFIED RECORDS

Records submitted for *Heritage* have been checked as far as possible by the writers of the various sections. They have not all been formally validated by County Recorders (as this is not practical on a quarterly basis). Full details of the records are submitted to Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre LRERC, County Hall, Glenfield, Leics. LE3 8RA, either as spreadsheets or as scans of paper records. Once validated, selected records will be added to the LRERC database and made accessible to the public.

The original records are archived. All of the older paper records have been deposited at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston Magna, Leics. LE18 2AH, accession number DE9392. Most pre-2011 paper records are also available on a disc (see *Heritage* 205). Recent paper records will reside with Helen Ikin, until a batch is ready to go to the Record Office.

## MAMMALS

PJD's garden **Hedgehogs** have moved on but a neighbour in Quorn has had one adult with two youngsters in her garden during October. SFW has had a live Hedgehog at Groby and a dead one at Desford.

DAP has had **Moles** in his Swithland garden all through the quarter and molehills have been noted at Lubenham beside River Welland, Broombriggs Farm, Appleby Magna churchyard, Desford, Thornton Reservoir, South Croxton, Natural Burial Ground near Barsby, Exton, Whissendine, Queniborough, Blackfordby, Potters Marston, Croft, Worthington, fields at Newtown Linford near the Bradgate car park, Buckminster, Garthorpe, Redmile and Bottesford.

DAP had a rare sighting of a **Water Shrew** in the Swithland Reservoir feeder stream near Rabbits Bridge. They are probably more common than we realise but are difficult to see.

Single **Brown Hares** were seen at Cosby, Buckminster and Garthorpe, two at Redmile and three in a snowy ploughed field near Kimcote - motionless but very obvious against the snow.

Small numbers of live **Rabbits** were seen at Newtown Linford, Billesdon, Woodhouse and Keyham and signs of Rabbits at Cosby and Garthorpe. We found the distinctive skull of a Rabbit in Sheet Hedges Wood.

**Grey Squirrel** – SR had a frequent squirrel visitor in her Quorn garden throughout the summer and SFW had one regularly visiting his Groby garden. Others were seen at Woodhouse, Queniborough, Millennium Peace Park in Wigston Magna, Bradgate Park in the extension car park and in a canal-side garden near Loughborough Lock. Very flat squirrels are not an uncommon sight on Charnwood roads.

**Wood Mice** have been clearing up dropped seed under DAP's bird feeder in Swithland through the quarter and PJD failed to rescue one caught by her neighbour's cat in Quorn.

There was a sighting of a **Brown Rat** on the river bank in Market Harborough, but no Otters (that are reputed to frequent the river in the middle of town). ATO found a dead rat near Bedford Square in Loughborough and JG had a regular one in her Holwell garden.

**Red Fox** footprints were seen in the snow near Walton Lodge and SR had one on her Quorn patio in August and regular visits in October and November. There was a dead fox on the main road into Loughborough in early November and PJD had one visiting her Quorn garden in October - caught on the camera trap.

Roadkill **Badgers** were noted near Cropston Reservoir, Warren Hill, Market Harborough and Groby and Badger dung pits or recent excavations were recorded at Broombriggs, Swithland and Cosby.

The tiny slots of **Muntjac** were seen at Buckminster and there was a dead male on the road verge at Warren Hill and one near Roeclyffe Manor – or Roeclyffe Hall as it now seems to be called. Single live Muntjac were spotted near Swithland Wood and on a verge next to Sheet Hedges Wood.

**Roe Deer** were resting in a field near Sheet Hedges Wood on 12 October.

Helen Ikin

## BIRDS

The only **Mute Swan** numbers of any consequence were at Groby Pool with 19 in October and 50 at Swithland Reservoir in early December. Groby Pool had three **Whooper Swans** on 27 October and the same number was at Sence Valley Forest Park on 5 November.

Albert Village Lake provided the only counts of **Canada Geese** with a maximum of 108 on 8 October. **Greylag Geese** were very sparse, being seen only at Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs with a maximum of four at either site. A single **Egyptian Goose** was at Groby Pool on 23 October.



*Mallard © Steve Woodward*

There were no large numbers of **Wigeon** this quarter with 28 at Sence Valley on 28 October being the highest count. **Gadwall** were seen at Cropston Reservoir, (and nowhere else) throughout the quarter but never more than two. Cropston Reservoir also held the most **Teal**, 18 on 8 October. Even **Mallard** were sparse with 22 at Albert Village on 19 November being the highest count. A **Shoveler**, the only record, was at Groby Pool on 29 October. On 12 December there was a **Red-crested Pochard** at Watermead Park South. Twenty-six **Pochard** were at Swithland Reservoir on 5 December and 24 **Tufted Duck** at Albert Village on 19 November. **Goldeneye** were to be seen at Swithland Reservoir and Groby Pool with a maximum of five at the former site on 30 October. Five **Goosander** were on the River Soar at Birstall on 12 December.

Ten **Pheasants** at Cropston Reservoir on 8 October – only two records for this species – the other one was from Holwell where JG had a Pheasant visiting her garden twice in December.



*Little Egret © Steve Woodward*

All **Cormorant** reports were from Cropston Reservoir with regular double-figure counts, 74 the highest on 12 December. The same site along with Bradgate Park also had all the **Little Egret** observations with a maximum of six during October. On 5 December a **Great White Egret** was found at Swithland Reservoir and the following two days there were two present. Cropston Reservoir was also the place to see **Grey Herons**, they were present throughout the quarter with 13 on 1 October.

**Little Grebes** were noted at six sites with ten at Albert Village on 19 Nov. **Great Crested Grebes** were seen at Albert Village and Cropston Reservoir where there were 41 on 12 December.

A single **Red Kite** was over Twyford in early November and December and two were seen at Exton Park on 6 November. **Sparrowhawks** were found in ten separate areas, some in gardens, all reports were of single birds apart from two at Groby Pool in November. **Buzzards** were widespread across the area usually in ones or twos but six were over Loughborough on 12 October. Surprisingly, there were slightly more **Kestrel** observations than Buzzards with sightings across the area. All were of single birds apart from a regular pair at Kelham Bridge. A late **Hobby** was over Swithland Reservoir waterworks grounds on 16 October. A pair of **Peregrines** could be found around Leicester Cathedral by the end of the year and two were noted over the quarry at Swithland Reservoir on Christmas Day.

**Water Rails** were present at four sites with two seen at Watermead Park and Groby Pool, one was regularly seen at Kelham Bridge and another at Thornton Reservoir. There were few **Moorhen** records with a maximum count of 20 at Kelham Bridge on 3 October. There was a

similar dearth of **Coot** records but 80 were counted at Albert Village Lake on 8 October.

A lone **Golden Plover** flew over Bradgate Park on 15 October. The surrounds of Cropston Reservoir held the most **Lapwing** with 61 in October and 52 in December. There were regular sightings of **Snipe** at Cropston Reservoir, Groby Pool, and Kelham Bridge where there were six on 5 December. A lone **Woodcock** was flushed in Bradgate Park on 21 October and another was in a hedge in Holwell on 12 December.

The only **Green Sandpipers** of the quarter were singles at Cropston Reservoir and Kelham Bridge both in early October.

Most of the Gull records were from Albert Village Lake which, being adjacent to the landfill site, makes it ideal for gull watchers. Although there were 126 **Black-headed Gulls** at Albert Village on 19 November, this was outnumbered by 179 at Cropston Reservoir on 8 October. Two **Common Gulls** were at Albert Village Lake with the previous BHGs. Cropston Reservoir held double-figure numbers of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** during October and November but 161 at Albert Village on 8 October was the highest count. Fourteen was the highest count of **Herring Gulls**, at Cropston Reservoir on 8 October. **Greater Black-backed Gulls** peaked at 17 at Albert Village on 19 November, when two **Yellow-legged Gulls** were also present.

Apart from garden visits at Cropston and Hugglescote, **Stock Doves** were only noted at Cropston Reservoir when three birds were present in late October. During October there was a regular passage of **Woodpigeons** over the Bradgate/Cropston area with three-figure counts but 2,510 were counted over the memorial area on the 29th. **Collared Doves** were only recorded from a Holwell garden. **Ring-necked Parakeets** appear to be moving north with regular sightings in Quorn in mid-October and one at Watermead Park in December.

Most of the **Little Owl** reports were from Bradgate Park where there were four on 12 December and ones and twos on other dates. Other singles were seen in a Cropston garden and at Field Head, Groby. Two **Tawny Owls** were calling in Bradgate Park on 15 November and

one heard at Grace Dieu on 30 December. Unfortunately, there was no mention of **Barn Owls** anywhere.

**Kingfishers** were noted at Watermead Park, Groby Pool, Thornton Reservoir, Bradgate Park and Kelham Bridge where at least one was seen on a daily basis throughout the quarter.

**Green Woodpeckers** were only recorded around Cropston and Groby and **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were noted in similar areas but also in various members' gardens at the bird feeders.

The maximum number of **Magpies** seen together was four and **Jays** five. Likewise **Jackdaws** were only reported as a maximum of 20 but there must be up to 100 regularly around Hugglescote church. Twenty-four **Rooks** were counted at Cosby Spinney on 16 November and most **Crow** reports were of single birds visiting gardens. Recently **Ravens** have been the most commonly reported corvid and this was the case for this quarter. There were around 20 observations, mostly over Charnwood but also over a wider area of the county. The most seen together was three over Bradgate Park on 5 December.

The maximum number of **Goldcrests** seen together was two, they were however spread out with sightings in gardens as well as woodlands. By far the most tit records were from gardens with daily visits of **Blue, Great and Coal Tits**. The maximum **Blue Tit** count was eight at Cropston, **Great Tits** was seven at Hugglescote and **Coal Tits**, four again at Cropston. A single **Marsh Tit** was noted at Groby Pool in each month of the quarter and again Kelham Bridge (throughout the quarter) and Holwell were the only sites where **Willow Tits** were found. It appears to have been a good autumn for **Long-tailed Tits** with many groups sighted, mostly in gardens. A few had double-figure counts the best of which was 23 at Groby on 13 October.

Small numbers of **Skylarks** were recorded at Redmile, Coston and Cropston but there was a southern passage of ten over Groby and 41 over Sence Valley both in October.

Late or over-wintering **Chiffchaffs** were noted at Cropston Reservoir in October, Fosse Park and Blaby in November and Watermead

Park on 12 December. There was a **Willow Warbler** at Holwell on 12 November.

Bradgate Park had three **Nuthatches** on 25 October and others, usually singles were found at Groby Pool, Swithland Reservoir and Tom Longs Meadow, Quorn. **Treecreepers** were less obvious, the only sightings being at Thornton Reservoir and Swithland Reservoir. Only a few **Wrens** were mentioned and the most **Starlings** seen was 200 at Kimcote, Harborough on 28 December and about 200 at Holwell in mid-October.



*Starling © Steve Woodward*

A **Ring Ouzel** was with Blackbirds at Sence Valley on 28 October and the most **Blackbirds** seen together was 12 in a Cropston garden on 27 December. It was a poor autumn for **Fieldfares**, the largest flock reported was no more than 20. There was however a passage in October and 1,435 were counted flying south west over Sence Valley on the 28th. On the same day 562 **Redwings** were counted flying with the Fieldfares. As with the previous species, few other flocks were noted. Of the four **Mistle Thrush** records five in Bradgate Park on 1 Nov was the most seen.

Gardens provided all but one of the **Robin** records this being ten around Cropston Reservoir on 8 October. A female or first-winter **Black Redstart** was present at Newbold Verdon for a few days in late October. At the same time up to three **Stonechats** were to be found in Bradgate Park. One was present in mid-December.

All **Dunnock** and **House Sparrow** observations were in gardens, the most Dunnocks being five in my own garden at Hugglescote on the last day of the year. House Sparrows peaked at just 20 in a Loughborough



*Stonechat © Jim Graham*

garden on 7 November. Just one **Tree Sparrow** was seen, in a Holwell garden at the end of December.

One or two **Grey Wagtails** were regularly reported from Bradgate Park, there were two in a Cropston garden in late October, another in a Groby garden on Boxing Day and one regularly throughout the quarter in a Quorn garden. Thirty-two **Pied Wagtails** fed at the inflow at Cropston Reservoir on 1 October and at least 40 were seen roosting in trees in High Street Leicester on 19 October. **Meadow Pipits** were only noted at Cropston Reservoir, Groby Pool and Bradgate Park where there were seven on 25 October. On two occasions during October a **Rock Pipit** was noted flying over Ibstock.

On 28 October 42 **Chaffinches** were counted flying South West over Sence Valley. Other reports were all garden birds with 22 the largest count at Hugglescote. No large **Brambling** flocks were noted, two being the most seen at any time. All **Greenfinches** were garden birds with no more than seven noted. By far the biggest number of **Goldfinches** seen was in a Cropston garden where 60 were on the feeders and the surrounds on 12 December. **Siskins** were seen in small numbers but 100 were feeding in Alders at Groby Pool on 5 November. Two **Linnets** at Cropston Reservoir on 8 October was the only record of this species. There were four **Lesser Redpoll** at Swithland Reservoir on 4 December and 17 at Groby Pool on 23 October. Small numbers of **Bullfinch** were widespread with a maximum of five at Swithland Reservoir on Christmas Day and a similar number in my own Hugglescote garden throughout the quarter. The bird of the quarter was the **Hawfinch** with many coming to the British Isles this Autumn. Some stayed around the same area and others

seemed to pop up anywhere. Battram and Ibstock were sites where there were regular sightings with up to six at Battram. Small groups amounting to 19 passed over Sence Valley on 28 October.

Small numbers of **Yellowhammers** were noted at half a dozen sites with 30 in Bradgate Park on 29 October. Five **Reed Buntings** were there on the same day and three visited JG's Holwell garden on 12 November.

Bas Forgham

## REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS

As might be expected in the autumn, our sightings for this group have been few and far between and the few sightings which we do have all come from sites which feature regularly in this column.

**Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*** : HI reports finding a single specimen near the north wall of Bradgate Park on 6 October and this is the only sighting that we have for this quarter.

**Slow worm *Anguis fragilis***: We have three sightings of this reptile and all from Quorn. SR reports finding one in a compost heap in Paddock Close on 8 September and a month later, on the other side of the village in Barrow Road, PJD had two specimens on 8 October. The first was a large one found early in the day in her own garden which was moved to a safer place and on the same day there was a smaller one in a neighbour's compost heap. She comments that this seems to be a favourite haunt for these reptiles.

**Common or Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris***: This quarter we have three sightings of this amphibian from three different sites. SR had several throughout the summer in a pond in Paddock Close, Quorn. PJD reports disturbing a large specimen while tidying part of her garden in Barrow Road, Quorn on 27 October. Finally HB heard from Maggie Frankum that she found 22 efts (young newts) whilst clearing leaves from her garden pond in Knighton as well as some young toads.

**Common Toad *Bufo bufo***: PJD reports disturbing a large toad while tidying a flower bed in her

Quorn garden and MF had young toads as reported above.

**Common Frog *Rana temporaria***: Rather surprisingly we have only one sighting of this amphibian this quarter and again it is PJD who found numerous froglets under vegetation in her Quorn garden.

Tony Onions

## FISH including CRAYFISH

We have only one set of sightings to write about this quarter and these are the result of a visit to Loughborough Canal in November 2017. ATO had visited the canal further "downstream" and was determined to revisit the canal before the weather – and consequently the water, became too cold for some of the fish species reputedly present in the canal to remain active.

English canals are typically quite shallow, usually no more than 2 m deep and are generally regarded as "stillwaters". This is because they are usually fed by a reservoir at the "top" or "upstream" end and the only time that the water flows is when a boat passes through one of the locks and a quantity of water is discharged from the upper level to the lower level. However the situation with the Loughborough Canal is rather different. The Loughborough Canal is linked to the River Soar and is one of a series of "bypasses" along the Soar Valley, designed to make the River Soar navigable. Consequently a certain amount of water passes along the canal and there are overflows built into the locks to allow this water to pass through from level to level. ATO chose to explore the canal just below the outfall from the overflow of Loughborough lock to try to ascertain which species of fish were present. This lock is to the north of the Belton Road bridge and at the back of the former "Staples" stationery supplier.

Accordingly ATO visited this section of the canal on 2 November, arriving in the late morning and remaining there until the early evening. The weather at the time was reasonably settled and over cast. During the visit the following specimens were obtained.

One **Gudgeon *Gobio gobio*** approx. 10 cm long.

Thirteen **Perch** *Perca fluviatilis* mostly in the 10–15 cm range but the largest was 30 cm long.

One **Ruffe** *Gymnocephalus cernuus* a tiny fish obviously a very young specimen – approx. 6 cm in length.

Coincidentally, the *Angling Times* of 31 October 2017, issue number 3337 contained a feature on this section of the canal. According to the article this section immediately downstream from the lock is the home of a large shoal of Chub *Leuciscus cephalus*. However on the day of his visit ATO failed to contact any of these fish. On the day in question the water in the canal appeared black and closer inspection revealed that the water was stained to the colour of tea! So why was the water this colour? One possibility was that dye had somehow been released into the water but after subsequent enquiries this theory was dismissed. The other possibility, and the more likely one, was that the colour was the result of tannins being released into the water from decomposing leaves. This phenomenon is not quite as outlandish as it seems! By 2 November many of the trees and bushes along the canal had shed their leaves and there had been very little rain for some time, so that the water levels in the main river were low and there was little “throughput” of water into the canal.

This phenomenon is particularly common in tropical rainforest streams and the most famous example is probably the Negro – the Black River in Brazil. The Rio Negro is a major tributary of the Amazon which it joins at Manaus in the centre of Amazonia. When viewed from the air it is easy to see how the river got its name. The main stem of the Amazon and its headwater tributaries have their sources in the Andes but the Rio Negro, in contrast, has its source in the uplands of Northern Brazil where the borders of Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil meet. Thus the entire course of the river lies within tropical rainforest. Millions of years of tropical rainfall have long since leached the nutrients out of the substrate and so the only nutrients to come into the river come from the steady trickle of dead leaves which fall from the forest canopy - hence the colour of the water. Closer to home here in the British Isles a similar effect can be found in streams and lakes which have their sources in the peat bogs in the uplands and highlands of

the west and the north. At times, especially after heavy rain, these waters become stained and tannins from the layers of peat through which the water has drained. The obvious question is: what effect does the acidity from the tannins have upon the life within the watercourse? The short answer is that this acidity has a very marked effect on all of the life, both invertebrate and vertebrate, within the watercourse.

### **‘Hard’ and ‘soft’ water?**

Normal rainwater contains a quantity of carbonic acid and is therefore mildly acidic. When rain falls on impermeable rock such as the granite outcrops of Charnwood Forest, it has little effect and the soils in such areas tend to be thin and acidic. Similarly the water which drains out of these soils will also be slightly acidic – and is known colloquially as ‘soft’ water. However, when rain falls on limestone hills or chalk downs it is a different story. The rainwater percolates down through the limestone and the chalk and when it finally emerges as a spring at the base of the hill it is no longer acidic, having acquired a mixture of dissolved mineral including quantities of calcium and magnesium. This water is colloquially known as “lime rich” or “hard” water. If you live in a hard water area the inside of your electric kettle acquires a growth of “limescale”.

The acidity or alkalinity of natural water can be measured on a logarithmic scale known as the pH scale which runs from 1 to 14, 1 being very acidic and 14 extremely alkaline; 7 is neutral.

The word logarithmic appears to mean that a pH value of 9 is ten times more alkaline than a pH of 8.

The obvious question is – how important is this issue to life in freshwater?

Those of you who are gardeners will be aware that some plants require a lime rich soil in which to thrive while others require an acidic soil and some are happy in either situation. The same applies to life in freshwater – both plant and animal: acidity and alkalinity play an extremely important role in determining the presence or otherwise of different species in freshwater habitats. The cold acidic water of upland streams is a comparatively hostile environment and there is virtually no plant life, few

## BUTTERFLIES

Some six species remained active during the early part of the quarter but only the Red Admiral made it into November.

A male **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** was seen on 14 October flying across the private road to the NE side of Swithland Reservoir near the Kinchley Road bend.

On 14 October two **Large White *Peiris brassicae*** were observed visiting flowers in our Quorn garden and the same day one was present in MF's Knighton garden. Several other white butterflies were noted during the month but not specifically identified.

The **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** was reported seen in seven widely spread localities during October, usually visiting Ivy blossom but also Michaelmas Daisies and with a maximum of four at Leicester Arboretum on 6th. During November two were also present in our Quorn garden and another at Desford on the 1st and at Exton on the 6th.



Red Admiral © Jim Graham

A **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** was seen at Keyham on 5 October when a late **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** was also noted in a Warwick Avenue, Quorn garden.

Early in October three **Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*** were noted at Newtown Linford and singletons at Quorn on the 2nd and Beatty Avenue in Leicester on the 5th.

On behalf of the Club I wish to thank all those members and friends who submitted records during 2017.

Peter Gamble

invertebrates and even fewer fish which flourish under these conditions. One group of insects which can usually be found in this type of environment is the Plecoptera or Stoneflies which, as nymphs, live in the water for some months before emerging as adults to breed. They are regarded as “indicator species” as they require comparatively clean, unpolluted water. There are 34 species of Stonefly in the British Isles and just a few of them can tolerate alkaline water, the best known of these, to anglers, are the Willow Fly *Leuctra geniculata* and the Yellow Sally *Isoperla grammatica*. These are the only two species that the author found in any quantity in the upper reaches of the Derbyshire Dove – a rocky, fast flowing and alkaline environment. As far as fish are concerned, there are two species which are commonly found in small streams the Brown Trout *Salma trutta fario* and the Chub *Squalius cephalus*. The Brown Trout is tolerant of a wide range of pH values and can be found in both acidic upland streams and lime-rich chalk rivers. However, like the other Salmonids, it is happy only within a comparatively narrow range of temperatures. The Chub, on the other hand, is unusual among British Cyprinids in that it tolerates a wide range of water temperatures and will feed at very low temperatures but it is not tolerant of acidic waters and prefers a neutral to alkaline pH.

According to the Reihl and Baensch “Aquarium Atlas” most freshwater fish prefer pH value between 6 & 7.5, although some species will tolerate values as low as 5 or as high as 9. The importance of pH values should not be underestimated and sudden wild fluctuations in pH can have a devastating effect on aquatic life.

In Heritage 223 I included a news item regarding a large grant that the Environment Agency had obtained to install fish passes on weirs in the Severn river system. I expressed a hope that something similar might be undertaken for the Trent system, so I am pleased to be able to report that according to an item in the current edition of ‘Trout and Salmon’ magazine, the EA are trying to raise £20 million to finance similar work on the Trent. The installing of fish passes would be beneficial, not only for the Salmon, but also for the “coarse fish” species in the river.

Tony Onions

## MOTHS

A considerably better result than this time last year with 586 moths of 48 species from six recorders, although at the time of writing the weather for the next quarter is not looking very productive at all.

In checklist order, singles of *Caloptilia populetorum* was at Charnwood Lodge at the end of October, *Caloptilia stimatella* at Cloud Wood in late December and the mines of **Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner** *Cameraria ohridella* were found at Thornton Reservoir in early November. *Ypsolopha parenthesesella* and *Y. ustella* were recorded throughout October at Charnwood Lodge and Stoneywell. A mid-October light-trapping session at Charnwood Lodge produced a single *Diurnea lipsiella*, which is most likely to be found on the Charnwood Forest as the food plants are Oak and Bilberry, so records for this species are usually very low. A solitary *Carcina quercana*, another Oak feeder, but also found on Beech in mid-October at Charnwood Lodge. As most of the records for this quarter came from Charnwood Lodge, I will abbreviate it to CL from now on, only mentioning the other sites by name. Both *Blastobasis adustella* and *B. lacticolella* were at light in October, plus **Light Brown Apple Moth** *Epiphyas postvittana*, *Acleris sparsana*, *A. emargana*, *A. ferrugana* and *A. notana*. The latter were determined by gen. det. to confirm to species level as opposed to putting them down as *A. ferrugana/notana* agg. As well as CL, Cloud Wood and Stoneywell Wood produced good numbers of **December Moth** *Poecilocampa populi*.

CL produced the only **Spruce Carpet** *Thera britannica* and **Grey Pine Carpet** *Thera obeliscata* where **Red Green Carpet** *Chlorochlysta siterata* was widespread, often in good numbers including 49 at CL in mid-October. The last of the **Common Marbled Carpet** *Dysstroma truncata* were seen mid-October and the first of five **Northern Winter Moth** *Operophtera fagata* and 38 **Winter Moth** *O. brumata* started in mid-November, including 35 of the latter from Cloud Wood in late December. The various sites on the Charnwood Forest held all the records for 48 **November Moth** *Epirrita dilutata* and three **Autumnal Moth** *E. autumnata*, with both species starting



November Moth © Steve Woodward

to appear in early October. Altogether, over 200 individuals of the genus *Epirrita* were recorded this quarter, so random samples of the last four species were taken for gen. det. examination. The results show that Northern Winter Moth is nowhere near as abundant as Winter Moth, the same with Autumnal Moth and November Moth, the latter being the most common. When these four species are recorded they invariably get logged as aggregates, which can give the impression that they are as common as each other, when on closer investigation they are they obviously are far from it. Bradgate Park had the only **Dusky Thorn** *Ennomus fuscantaria* (all the Bradgate Park records that follow are from 2, 3 & 8 October) with **Feathered Thorn** *Colotois pennaria* from most sites, then CL and Cloud Wood the only records of **Mottled Umber** *Erannis defoliaria*.



Mottled Umber © Graham Finch

A caterpillar of **Pale Tussock** *Calliteara pudibunda* was found in Bradgate Park in early October. A single **Rosy Rustic** *Hydraecia micacea* was found at Bradgate Park and **Barred Sallow** *Tiliacea aurago* recorded from CL and Stoneywell and it seemed to have quite a short flight period, first recorded from the previous quarter on 26 September and the last record for 28 October, so just a month on the wing. All the



Pale Tussock caterpillar © Steve Woodward

**Pink-barred Sallow *Xanthia togata***, **Beaded Chestnut *Agrochola lychnidis*** and **Brown-spot Pinion *Agrochola litura*** all came from Bradgate Park.



Flounced Chestnut © Graham Finch

**Flounced Chestnut *Agrochola helvola***, although well represented, was only at CL, surely this has to be one of the prettiest moths of the autumn. A very close relative of the previous species **Red-line Quaker *Agrochola lota*** with just a singleton recorded from CL. It has never really been a particularly common moth, but there are usually a few more records each year than this, although September and October is the “official” flight time, for a few years it was recorded well into November.



Yellow-line Quaker © Steve Woodward

**Yellow-line Quaker *Agrochola macilenta*** on the other hand were well recorded from all Charnwood Forest sites.

Still in the same genus **Brick *Agrochola circellaris*** was on the wing throughout October from CL and Stoneywell. **Lunar Underwing *Omphaloscelis lunosa***, **Common Wainscot *Mythimna pallens***, and **Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba*** were all only at Bradgate Park. No surprises that **Chestnut *Conistra vaccinii*** was throughout the quarter with 23 and ten at CL and Stoneywell respectively, although **Dark Chestnut *Conistra ligula*** was very elusive and only reported twice at CL and Stoneywell. The same two sites produced the only **Grey Shoulder-knot *Lithophane ornitopus*** both as singletons.



Grey Shoulder-knot © Graham Finch

Another species that never seems to be in a short supply is **Satellite *Eupsilia transversa*** recorded at all sites visited. Okay, maybe another contender for prettiest autumnal species is **Merveille du Jour *Gripesia aprilina*** recorded from CL and Stoneywell, I admit it is a stunning moth. A moth that is now expected every autumn is **Black Rustic *Aporophyla nigra*** again at the same sites as above. Finally the last of **Setaceous Hebrew Character *Xestia c-nigrum*** were at CL and Bradgate Park up to mid-October. There are a few small groups of moths that get lumped together as aggregates and I think this does give us the wrong impression of their status. We need to be careful when stating whether we think they are abundant and common, when without critical examination, in fact we are only just assuming this to be so.

Many thanks for everyone’s contributions for this quarter.

**Graham and Anona Finch**

## BEE TL ES

Interestingly we are noticeably down on individuals recorded for this quarter last year, 346 (2018) compared with 552 (2017) but significantly up on the number of species 74 (2018) compared to 51 (2017). Also included are the last of the results from Richard Wilson's Charnwood Lodge Arachnid Survey. Richard has produced a very detailed 60 page report of this survey which has been handed to the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust. Anyone wanting to view this report should contact the Trust directly. The report in the main refers to Richard's Arachnid survey but he has also included other invertebrates collected as by-catch or incidental observations.

Okay, now on to the beetles, just four species of water beetles were recorded all at Charnwood Lodge, referred to as CL from now on; two *Hyphydrus ovatus*, one *Agabus nebulosus* and one *A. sturmii* all from the same session at the beginning of October, from the pond half way down the main track. The Carabids fared fairly well with 19 species being recorded, the five species of Bembidions were *B. biguttatum* at Loughborough Big Meadows, (LBM from now on), and Staunton Harold from mid-November into December. *B. guttula* was found on several occasions but only recorded from the Soar Valley with two *B. lunulatum* from CL, three *B. mannerheimi* and a single *B. properans* from LBM both in November. Just a single of the usually abundant *Pterostichus madidus* was found in Sheet Hedges Wood and numbers of *P. vernalis*, *P. diligens* and *P. strenuus* were found in the Soar Valley and CL. A single *Calathus melanocephalus*, a medium sized Carabid with blackish head and elytra but reddish orange pronotum, was found at LBM in mid-November by sieving grass tussocks. The



*Badister bullatus* © Graham Finch

same day and method well over 50 *Oxypselaphus obscurus*, four *Agonum fuliginosum*, 20 *Agonum thoreyi*, a solitary *Trichocellus placidus*, another black and orange species, four *Badister bullatus*. A Christmas Day visit to Sheet Hedges Wood produced singles of *Demetrius atricapillus* and *Paradromius linearis*. Beating willows at LBM produced a single black with four largish gold spots *Calodromius spilotus* and to finish off the Carabids the vacuum sampling of the by-catch of the Arachnid survey located several *Philorhizus melanocephalus* from two different areas of the reserve. The fourth water beetle species was a lone *Helochares punctatus* from CL. The pond halfway down the main entrance track into the reserve is proving to be a reliable location for this species, having been recorded here for the last three years. This makes it a 20 year gap between records when Derek found it at Newfields Colliery and Fosse Meadows in 1996. A similar situation with two *Agathidium laevigatum*, which were in the vacuum samples from CL, again last recorded by Derek in 1996 from Newell Wood and 1997 at Shellbrook. Also a single *Choleva agilis*, same family as the previous species Leiodidae, was found on the washing at Ibstock. With just ten previous records and the last in 1996, a single *Stenichnus collaris* was identified from the acid grassland vacuum sample from CL.



*Choleva agilis* © Graham Finch

On to the Staphylinidae, with 25 species recorded, the most for any family this quarter, starting with *Tachyporus dispar* recorded from all sites on the forest, *Tachyporus hypnorum*, *T. obtusus*, *T. pallidus* and *Tachinus corticinus* only at LBM. A total of ten species of *Stenus* were recorded, a few being *S. clavicornis* which was widespread, *S. lustrator*, *S. providus* and *S. fulvicornis*, *S. flavipes*, *S. picipes*, *S. impressus* and *S. osium* which were only found at CL and *S. bifoveolatus* from Sheet Hedges Wood and

CL. Sieving grass tussocks on LBM in mid-November produced *Lathrobium longulum* and *L. geminum*, a single Devil's Coach-horse *Ocyopus olens* was found under a rotting log in Sheet Hedges Wood on Christmas Day and early December produced *Xantholinus linearis* at Ratcliffe on Soar and *X. longiventris* at Staunton Harold both found by sieving grass tussocks.

Not much dung sampling was undertaken this period and so the Aphodius list is quite short with *Aphodius prodromus* the most abundant and widespread, *A. sphacelatus* at Altar Stones, *A. contaminatus* at Altar Stones and Ratby and lastly *A. sticticus* at Altar Stones and Kirby Grange. All the Aphodius records are from early October. The only Click Beetle found was a singleton *Agriotes linearis* from LBM and the only Soldier Beetle was *Cantharis nigra* from Market Bosworth Country Park in November and October respectively.

Just three species of Ladybird were reported, with Orange Ladybird *Halyzia sedecimguttata* from Sheet Hedges Wood and Quorn, Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* quite widespread and the highest total of 25 from Barrow upon Soar churchyard and 7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata* from Orton on the Hill and Muston.



Heather Beetle © Graham Finch

Both records of Heather Beetle *Lochmaea suturalis* were from vacuum sampling at CL and a single *Longitarsus jacobaeae* was found on the lawn at a Knighton garden. Sieving grass tussocks produced four *Altica lythri* early in December at Ratcliffe on Soar and just one *Crepidodera plutus* in mid-November at LBM. A total of nine species of weevils were found, two Gorse weevil *Exapion ulicis* and two *Perapion marchicum* in early October at CL. The latter species is a significant find by Richard Wilson's arachnid survey as there have only been two



*Apion frumentarium* © Graham Finch

previous records and the latest of these was in 1907, noted in the *Victoria County History*. A singleton of *Apion frumentarium* was sieved from grass tussocks at LBM and the similar *Apion haematodes* from the vacuum sample at CL.



Strawberry Weevil © Graham Finch

There was only one record of the Vine Weevil *Otiorhynchus sulcatus* was found at Ibstock, a single Strawberry Weevil *Sciaphilus asperatus* was from LBM and two Nut Leaf Weevil *Strophosoma melanogrammmum* were at CL in mid-October. The most frequent species was *Sitona lineatus*, although only recorded from the Charnwood Forest and lastly a singleton of the very similar *Andrion regensteinense* from LBM.

Many thanks to the contributors for this quarter.

Graham and Anona Finch

## OTHER INSECTS

The only Hemiptera records for this quarter come from HB who found two adults of the **Hawthorn Shieldbug** *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidalis* in Victoria Park on 12 October.

### Diptera

#### Hoverflies

Just a few records from HB who was out in the city in early October and recorded one **Marmalade Hoverfly** *Episyrphus balteatus* on Ivy in Beatty Avenue and another on Victoria Park. One *Melanostoma scalare*, also on Victoria Park. One of the spectacular *Volucella zonaria* on Humberstone Park and several **Drone Flies** *Eristalis tenax* on Ivy, again in Beatty Avenue. There were several of the easy to recognise, *Myathropa florea* with other insects on sunny Ivy on the wall in Bradgate car park at Newtown Linford.

Other flies seen by SFW & HI were *Mesembrina meridionalis* at Keyham and in Desford Cemetery and leaf mines in holly made by the larvae of the small fly *Phytomyza ilicis* were in evidence at Croft on 15 November.

### Hymenoptera

A few bumblebees were still around this quarter – **Common Carder Bee** *Bombus pascuorum* in PHG's Quorn garden and Leicester Arboretum on 6 October, at New Lount NR on 15 October, Ulverscroft NR on 31 October and at Dove Cottage tearoom (highly recommended) by the Grantham Canal on 29 October

The **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus terrestris* was spotted at Thurstaston on 14 October, Humberstone Park on 5 October, at Leicester Arboretum in Knighton on 6 October and 1 December and a few in HB's Abney Street garden on 8 October. Probable workers and one queen were in PHG's garden from 16 November until the end of December feeding on flowers of *Lonicera fragrantissima*. We say "probable" because the workers have white tails and, in the field, are difficult to tell from *Bombus lucorum* agg. However, *B. lucorum* does not seem to be around as late as *B. terrestris*.

A queen **Tree Bumblebee** *Bombus hypnorum* was seen in Beatty Avenue on 16 October.

There were lots of **Honey Bees** *Apis mellifera* feeding on Ivy in Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves on 13 October.



Hornet on Ivy © Steve Woodward

**Hornets** *Vespa crabro* have not been so common this summer but we have five sightings, mostly on Ivy blossom, in October from Swithland Reservoir, Broombriggs Farm, Bradgate, in PHG's Quorn garden until 26th October and in Sheet Hedges Wood where there was a nest in a bird box.



Hornet taking over a nest box © Helen Ikin

The other social wasps also seem to have been scarce this year and we have three records for the **Common Wasp** *Vespula vulgaris* at Humberstone Park and Beatty Avenue in the first week of October and a single at Groby as late as 10 November and just one record of the **German Wasp** *Vespula germanica* at Woodhouse Eaves on 13 October. HB remarks that there are fewer wasps than usual on the Ivy blossom this autumn. These two species are the commonest social wasps and the way to tell them apart is to look at the yellow stripe behind the eye – in *V. vespula* it will have black mark in the middle, sometimes reduced, so you have to look carefully, there is usually an anchor mark on the face too.

Helen Ikin

## GALLS

There are very few gall records this quarter and will be even less next quarter so it has been decided to include the gall report just once a year.

## FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

The next *Heritage* will include a report for the two winter quarters.

## OTHER RECORDS

**Records have also been received for:**

Ants, aphids, barklice, caddisflies, centipedes, harvestmen, molluscs, woodlice, mites, mosses, lichens, liverworts and fungi, lacewings, mayflies and solitary bees & wasps.

## WEATHER

October was another milder month than usual and this made it five warmer than average Octobers running. Indeed since the year 2000 average temperatures for this month were 1.3°C higher than the 1990s and of all the months of the year this one has recently warmed the most. Afternoon temperatures were logged at 15.5°C, 1.5°C above normal with night temperatures being recorded at 9.6°C a very significant 2.5°C above normal. This made the mean temperature of 12.6°C, 2°C above the long term normal making October 2017 the 13th warmest in 350 years. Winds blew in from a mild and moist SW direction for the majority of the time and most days were milder than usual. The warmest day was logged on the 14th at 20°C with the coldest at 10°C on the 30th. Nights were also mainly mild with the warmest one a balmy 14.8°C and even the coldest on the 30th at 1.4°C meant we still avoided air frost for October once again. Somewhat surprisingly was the low rainfall total with just 23 mm recorded or only 35% of the usual total. Sunshine figures were also down in the cloudy humid conditions with just 94 hours being logged, 15% below the norm. Some months have distinct patterns indifferent weeks but apart from the third week which did see some rain most of the time mainly

cloudy and mild summed the weather up. Only time will tell if recent quiet patterns of weather in this month will remain or we may see a return to cooler and wetter conditions next year!

November was notable for two weather features in that it was both very dry and sunny. Indeed it was the driest November in Leicestershire since 2011 and the sunniest since 2013. Beginning with the rain - only 34 mm of rain was recorded in the entire month, which is only half the usual total. It was also a very sunny month with 95 hours of sunshine being recorded, which was 25% higher than usual. November temperatures were very close to normal with afternoon temperatures being logged at 10°C while night time temperatures were recorded at 4°C. There were three night time frosts. Winds mainly came in from a mild SW direction for the first three weeks then they veered to a NW flow for the final week. They reached a peak of 43 mph.

The month began mild with the only really wet day occurring on the 3rd when 12 mm of rain fell. Daytime temperatures for the first three weeks of the month remained mostly mild with the mildest day logged on the 22nd when 15°C was recorded. That night also saw the warmest night of November with the temperatures just dropping to 12.8°C. The last week of the month did see a big change with northerly winds setting in on the 24th and these brought with them the first snow of the season with snow showers being recorded on the 25th and 30th but any accumulations were very small and soon melted away. The coldest night of the season was the 17th when -1.5°C was logged in Mountsorrel. The computer models predicted the cold end to the month and many are also predicting a cold spell in December and if this does occur it will be the first significant cold spell since March 2013 but we will have to wait and see for this as accurate forecasts can now be extended to seven days but as yet not much further, watch this space!

December 2017 gave us some very varied weather and it contained both very mild and much colder spells. Afternoon temperatures averaged 7°C and night temperatures were logged at 2°C but this included ten night air frosts. The mean for the month was 4.5°C which is what you expect for December.



Snow on 11 December © Steve Woodward

Sunshine totals were logged at 62 hours once again close to the long term average. It was eventually a wet month however with 86 mm falling at Mountsorrel nearly 50% higher than the usual figure of 60 mm. It was very windy at times with our maximum gust of 40 mph being recorded on the 30th.

It was, as stated, a month of great contrasts. The first few days were mild and dry with the month's maximum temp of 12.1°C being recorded on the 7th. The 8th brought a dramatic change as a cold arctic plunge of air affected us for the next week. This brought nightly frosts and our lowest night temperature of December at -6°C on the 12th. The 10th gave us our first significant snowfall since March 2013 with 7 cm being recorded here in Mountsorrel and falling on a Sunday it meant many people were able to enjoy making their first snowman for several years! The weather changed for Christmas as it often does with a green Christmas for all of us with temperatures reaching 11°C on the big day. Colder conditions followed after Boxing Day with a little more snow before once again milder air spread in. Low pressure dominated most of the month but in the second week this moved east and a high pressure helped the cold air filter down to all of us but by the end of the month mild Atlantic winds were in charge again with winds gusting up to 40 MPH on the 31st with the temperatures once again in double figures. The final week also saw the return of the rain with over 55 mm falling or put another way the entire month's usual December rainfall coming down in a week. This caused extensive river flooding especially in the Soar Valley which saw all the usual roads closed for several days and caused some disruption to people's travel plans to end the year. So ended a very



Snow on 10 December © Steve Woodward

interesting winter month weather-wise and our first real feel of winter for nearly five years. Early signs are that this changing continues could continue into January so keep the sledges and the mops at the ready!

**Phil Morrish**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Heritage* has been compiled from records submitted by the following members and friends:

H Bradshaw, B Croxtall, R D Dandy, P J Darby, M A Finch, G L Finch, D B Forgham, M Frankum, P H Gamble, J Graham, S Graham, D Gray, J Green, H Ikin, A T Onions, D A Perry, S Ralph, S F Woodward,

We are grateful to them all.

Records for the first quarter of 2018 should be sent as soon as possible to:

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

email: [helen.canids@btinternet.com](mailto:helen.canids@btinternet.com)

Late records may not be included in the quarterly reports.