



No. 249

1 January - 31 March 2023

Editorial Panel: Steve Woodward, Jim Graham

Records Co-ordinator: Margaret McLoughlin, email: [loughboroughnaturalists.records@gmail.com](mailto:loughboroughnaturalists.records@gmail.com)

Hon. Sec. Sue Graham, 5 Lychgate Close, Cropston, Leics. LE7 7HU. email: [jsgraham83@aol.com](mailto:jsgraham83@aol.com)

## CLASSIFIED RECORDS

### MAMMALS

**Hedgehog** 'poo' was found by PJD on her garden path on 4 March; the first time "any activity has been seen for several months". Subsequently, images were caught on camera trap on ten nights between 7 and 31 March.

**Molehills** were found by SFW & HI at seven widespread locations.

Most of the 11 records of **Rabbit** found by SFW & HI were of singles, with two at Kirby Bellars, Queniborough and Waltham. There were just two **Brown Hare** sightings, four near Hoby and a single at Whissendine.

Strangely, the only report of **Grey Squirrel** was of four in a Loughborough garden on 4 March. A deceased Bank Vole was found in Holwell on 13 February.

**Red Fox** sightings came from just three locations: one seen on 14 nights on PJD's garden trailcam during March, one seen crossing Meadow Lane, Coalville in February and two were "yelping while running around a playing field, mid-morning" in Groby on 21 January.

**Badger** road-kill was reported from four locations, with evidence of live animals at two. The only one actually seen was caught on PJD's trailcam on five nights during March. An **Otter** was watched by SFW at Rutland Water from Lapwing Hide, "initially seen in the water then alighted among willows on the shoreline".

The only **Stoat** record came from Bradgate Park on 28 February. A dead Polecat was identified at Holwell by JGr on 1 February.

**Muntjac** 'slots' were located at three sites by HI & SFW, one animal was by the side of the road near Newtown Linford and a dead one was seen on the A426 in Lutterworth.

Jim Graham

## IN THIS EDITION

### CLASSIFIED RECORDS

- Mammals Page 1
- Bats Page 2
- Birds Page 8
- Reptiles and Amphibians Page 12
- Flowering Plants and Ferns Page 12
- Weather Page 15
- Acknowledgements Page 17

## Report for 2022

### Introduction

A few members of the Club have been involved with bat surveying activities during 2022. The surveys split into three distinct types: static monitoring, roost emergence counts and active monitoring. Two Members are also active 'Bat Carers' and a summary of their activities is included.

### Passive Monitoring

Passive Monitoring was performed by Peter Proudlove at Home Farm Nanpantan using a Wildlife Acoustics Song Meter Mini (SM Mini) belonging to Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT). Six locations were surveyed to cover a variety of different habitat types.

The SM Mini records the ultrasound calls of bats as they fly past the unit. Bats produce a variety of ultrasound calls for different purposes: echolocation, social, mating, distress, etc. We use the echolocation calls to determine the species of the bat passing.

Note: It is highly likely that the same bat will be recorded several times during the evening so the number of passes does not directly give the number of bats present.

The SM Mini records full spectrum .WAV sound files. These vary in size between approximately 1MB and 6MB and contain data up to approximately 100kHz.

To allow the call to be identified the *Acoustic Pipeline* from the British Trust for Ornithology was used. This is a cloud-based Artificial Intelligence (AI) system that reads the sound files and compares the signals to a library of reference calls. This also 'weeds out' any noise files (e.g. rain, wind, rustle, etc).

The calls of a number of UK bat species in the genus *Myotis* all look virtually identical and cannot be separated without actually seeing and/or handling the bat. For this reason, all individual *Myotis* species calls have been combined into the *Myotis* sp. category.

## Details for Bat Species Found

**Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*:** a very rare species in the UK, a medium-sized bat, distinctive by its pug-shaped nose. They are fast, agile flyers and specialist foragers in a range of habitats. Average weight of 12g with a wingspan of 280mm. Echolocation is centred on 32kHz. Food is mainly small moths, flies and beetles.



*Western Barbastelle*

**Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*:** a similar species to Noctule but slightly smaller and quite rare. Average weight of 25g with a wingspan of 330mm. Echolocation is centred on 25kHz. Food is medium insects e.g. moths and dung beetles.

**Myotis species: Brandt's *Myotis brandtii*; Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*; Natterer's *Myotis nattereri*; Whiskered *Myotis mystacinus*:** four species of bats in VC55 all are quite similar in appearance and very difficult to tell apart by sonogram analysis alone. Average weight of 10g with a wingspan of 280mm. Daubenton's have a specific and individual feeding method where they fly low over water and catch insect emerging from it with their large and hairy feet. If seen this allows definite identification as Daubenton's.

**Leisler's *Nyctalus leisleri*:** a similar species to Noctule but slightly smaller. Average weight of 18g with a wingspan of 300 mm. Echolocation is centred on 25kHz. Food is medium insects such as moths and beetles.

**Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*:** a common species in the UK. They fly fast and high over non-cluttered environments. They are the largest species in the UK with an average weight of 40g with a wingspan of 360mm. Echolocation is centred on 18 kHz. Food is large insects such as Cockchafer beetles.

**Nathusius Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*:** this is a rare species in the UK and like wooded foraging areas. Average weight is 10g with a wingspan of 250mm. Echolocation is centred on 38kHz. Food is small insects such as midges. The Nathusius is unusual for UK species in that it has been seen to migrate large distances with the record being over 2000km.

**Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*:** this is the most numerous species in the UK and the bats prefer wooded foraging areas. Average weight is 6g with a wingspan of 200mm. Echolocation is centred on 45 kHz. Food is small insects such as midges.

**Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*:** this is the second most numerous species in the UK and tend to forage near water. Average weight is 6 g with a wingspan of 200 mm. Echolocation is centred on 55kHz. Food is small insects such as midges. They were only recognised as a separate species in the 1970s.

**Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus*:** a medium-size species with very large ears. They are quite difficult to detect as due to their very large ears and thus superb hearing, they echolocate very quietly. It is likely that a larger quantity are actually present than would be predicted by the number detected. Average weight of 10g with a wingspan of 260mm. Echolocation is centred on 35kHz. Food is medium insects such as Moths, beetles, flies, earwigs and spiders.

## Home Farm Results

### Compartment 1

The habitat is open space at top of Buck Hill. The open space is not preferred by a lot of smaller bat species so this may be the reason for the reduced number of counts.

**Summary** of Compartment 1 recordings of eight species between 5 and 13 August.

Serotine: single passes on both 9 and 13 August.

Myotis species: 11 passes all singles except for five on the 13th.

Leisler's: a total of 27 passes over eight nights with seven on 10 August.

Noctule: a total of 384 passes over the nine nights with 72 on 12 August being the highest count.

Nathusius Pipistrelle: single passes on 9 and 10 August.

Common Pipistrelle: a total of 946 passes over the nine nights with a maximum of 346 on 13 August.

Soprano Pipistrelle: recorded on eight nights with 73 passes and a high of 22 on 12 August.

Brown Long-eared: 20 passes over the nine nights.

### Compartment 2

The habitat is a woodland ride overlooking a stream (Wood Brook). The number of Soprano Pipistrelles and Myotis are expected in a 'wet' environment.

**Summary** of Compartment 44 recordings of eight species between 28 June and 11 April.

Barbastelle: there was a single pass on 6 July.

Serotine: there were two passes on 6 July.

Myotis species: recorded on every evening with a total of 328 passes and a maximum of 72 on 9 July.

Leisler's: a total of eight passes from six nights.

Noctule: a total of 63 passes from 12 nights with a maximum of 22 on the 6 July.

Common Pipistrelle: recorded on every evening with a total of 3079 passes with over 300 on three nights.

Soprano Pipistrelle: recorded on every evening with a total of 1819 passes with maximum of 259 on 7 July.

Brown Long-eared: a total of 12 passes from eight nights.

### Compartment 8

The habitat is open woodland. The smaller number of bats recorded may be due to their being less food in the open woodland.

**Summary** of Compartment 8 recordings of six species between 12 July and 4 August.

Myotis species: recorded on every evening with a total of 520 passes. The highest count was 63 on 20 July.

Leisler's: ten passes from eight evenings.

Noctule: recorded on 21 of the 24 evenings with a maximum of 14 on 23 July.

Common Pipistrelle: recorded on 22 of the 24 evenings with a maximum of ten on both 20 and 21 July.

Soprano Pipistrelle: recorded on 23 of the 24 evenings with a total of 254 passes, and a maximum of 34 on 18 July.

Brown Long-eared: a total of 34 passes from 18 evenings with seven on 19 July the highest count.

### **Compartment 16**

The habitat is on the edge of woodland overlooking grassland. The high number of Noctule present demonstrates their preferred feeding method of flying high and swooping down for prey in clear areas.

**Summary** of Compartment 16 recordings of eight species between 26 May and 19 June.

Serotine: just the one record on 2 June

Myotis species: 179 passes over 19 of the 24 nights. Highest count was 42 on 10 June.

Leisler's: 18 passes over 11 nights.

Noctule: a total of 1082 passes from 22 nights, with counts in excess of 100 on four, the largest being 227 on 26 May.

Nathusius Pipistrelle: singles passes on three nights.

Common Pipistrelle: a total of 5873 passes from 22 nights, with counts in excess of 500 on five, the largest being 894 on 1 June.

Soprano Pipistrelle: 244 passes from 19 nights with the maximum being 93 on 2 June.

Brown Long-eared: 46 passes from 17 nights. The highest count was seven on 11 June.

### **Compartment 17**

The habitat is a semi-dense mixed woodland. The comparatively large quantity of Myotis is likely to be Natterer's as these are mostly woodland foragers.

**Summary** of Compartment 17 recordings of eight species between 14 and 25 May.

Barbastelle: a single pass on 16 May.

Serotine: 12 passes over six evenings.

Myotis species: a total of 650 passes from ten of the 12 nights, with two in excess of 100.

Leisler's: 12 passes over five evenings.

Noctule: 755 passes from 11 evenings with a maximum of 187 on 19 May.

Common Pipistrelle: a total of 12049 passes from the 12 evenings, with eight in excess of 1000 and three of those over 1500. The highest count was 1540 on 20 May.

Soprano Pipistrelle: 1102 passes over the 12 nights with maximum of 172 on 14 May.

Brown Long-eared: 45 passes from nine nights with maximum of 13 on 20 May.

### **Compartment 44**

The habitat is a semi-open ride between woodland and open fields with 80% tree cover. Bats will use the 'corridor' to move between foraging areas as well as feeding in the area. A very good mix of species found. It is very pleasing to find Barbastelle and Serotine in this area.

**Summary** of Compartment 44 recordings of nine species between 30 April and 13 May.

Barbastelle: a total of four passes on three nights.

Serotine: 14 passes over 9 nights with a maximum of seven on 2 May.

Myotis species: a total of 173 passes on 13 of the 14 nights with a maximum of 46 on 9 May.

Leisler's: 132 passes recorded over nine nights with 52 on 8 May the highest count.

Noctule: a total of 2316 passes on 13 of the 14 nights with 516 the best count on 8 May.

Nathusius Pipistrelle: 14 passes over seven nights.

Common Pipistrelle: by far the highest total of passes with 5310 over 13 nights with a maximum of 2465 on 9 May.

Soprano Pipistrelle: the only species to be recorded on all 14 nights with a total of 2292 passes. The best count was 614 on 9 May.

Brown Long-eared: 25 passes over nine nights the most being seven on 2 May.



## Passive Monitoring at Home Farm Nanpantan using a Wildlife Acoustics Song Meter Mini

Compartment 1	05-Aug	06-Aug	07-Aug	08-Aug	09-Aug	10-Aug	11-Aug	12-Aug	13-Aug	Totals
Serotine					1				1	2
Myotis sp.			1	1	1	1	1	1	5	11
Leisler's	3	2	4	3	3	7		4	1	27
Noctule	6	19	37	44	51	61	54	72	40	384
Nathusius' Pipistrelle					1	1				2
Common Pipistrelle	14	34	47	103	130	79	59	134	346	946
Soprano Pipistrelle		2	4	18	13	3	6	22	5	73
Brown Long-eared	1	1	2	2	1	4	3	4	2	20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>1465</b>

Compartment 2	28-Jun	29-Jun	30-Jun	01-Jul	02-Jul	03-Jul	04-Jul	05-Jul	06-Jul	07-Jul	08-Jul	09-Jul	10-Jul	11-Jul	Totals
Barbastelle									1						1
Serotine									2						2
Myotis sp.	14	6	11	21	12	11	11	20	18	37	59	72	17	19	328
Leisler's			1	1			1		3	1			1		8
Noctule	6	5	2	2	3		2		22	9	6	1	3	2	63
Common Pipistrelle	300	75	281	219	148	287	324	296	240	379	247	194	43	46	3079
Soprano Pipistrelle	86	124	145	151	94	91	125	119	251	259	139	121	48	66	1819
Brown Long-eared	3	1	1	1				1		2	2	1			12
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>5312</b>

Compartment 8	12-Jul	13-Jul	14-Jul	15-Jul	16-Jul	17-Jul	18-Jul	19-Jul	20-Jul	21-Jul	22-Jul	23-Jul	24-Jul	25-Jul	26-Jul	Totals
Myotis sp.	7	18	22	14	10	23	27	54	63	24	21	39	56	46	6	
Leisler's	1						1			2			1			
Noctule	1			3	3	1	4	6	8	3		14	4	4	1	
Common Pipistrelle	2	4	3	3	2	8	7	3	10	10	4	5	5	9	1	
Soprano Pipistrelle	7	25	16	12		11	34	21	14	16	2	20	9	4	3	
Brown Long-eared	1		1	1	1	3	1	7	1	1	2		2	1		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>11</b>	

Compartment 8	27-Jul	28-Jul	29-Jul	30-Jul	31-Jul	01-Aug	02-Aug	03-Aug	04-Aug	Totals
Myotis sp.	32	15	18	10	9	3		1	2	520
Leisler's	1	2				2				10
Noctule	7	7	3	1	8	5	3	3	1	90
Common Pipistrelle	3	2		3	7	2		1	1	95
Soprano Pipistrelle	8	4	2	9	1	8	17	3	8	254
Brown Long-eared		2		3	1	4	1	1		34
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1003</b>

Compartment 16	26-May	27-May	28-May	29-May	31-May	01-Jun	02-Jun	03-Jun	04-Jun	05-Jun	06-Jun	07-Jun	08-Jun	09-Jun	10-Jun	Totals
Serotine							1									1
Myotis sp.	22	3	5	1		15	28	2			6	19	7	7	42	
Leisler's	1	3		2			3	1			1	2	1			
Noctule	227	179	47	28	8	101	63	23	2		9	7	56	30	5	
Nathusius' Pipistrelle							1									
Common Pipistrelle	271	72	63	4	36	894	741	231	42		119	656	165	420	804	
Soprano Pipistrelle	29	3	9	6	1	24	93	7	2			28	2	11	12	
Brown Long-eared		1	1		1	3	1				1	2	3	1	3	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1037</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>866</b>	

Compartment 16	11-Jun	12-Jun	13-Jun	14-Jun	15-Jun	16-Jun	17-Jun	18-Jun	19-Jun	Totals
Serotine										1
Myotis sp.	5	2	2	4	3	4	2			179
Leisler's		1	2	1						18
Noctule	21	8	8	7	40	10	195		8	1082
Nathusius' Pipistrelle				1		1				3
Common Pipistrelle	616	83	129	134	95	163	109		26	5873
Soprano Pipistrelle	2	8	1		1	4	1			244
Brown Long-eared	7	4	1	6	2	3	6			46
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>7446</b>

Compartment 17	14-May	15-May	16-May	17-May	18-May	19-May	20-May	21-May	22-May	23-May	24-May	25-May	Totals
Barbastelle			1										1
Serotine	2		2	2		4	1		1				12
Myotis sp.	75	1	55	117		114	81	80	51		44	32	650
Leisler's	3		2			1		3	3				12
Noctule	112	5	139	62	2	187	27	89	99		12	21	755
Common Pipistrelle	1529	11	1287	947	9	1438	1540	1515	1118	95	1193	1367	12049
Soprano Pipistrelle	172	1	123	168	2	129	92	121	96	4	102	92	1102
Brown Long-eared	1		2	4		2	13		5	2	6	10	45
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1611</b>	<b>1300</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1875</b>	<b>1754</b>	<b>1808</b>	<b>1373</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>1357</b>	<b>1522</b>	<b>14626</b>

Compartment 44	30-Apr	01-May	02-May	03-May	04-May	05-May	06-May	07-May	08-May	09-May	10-May	11-May	12-May	13-May	Totals
Barbastelle								2	1			1			4
Serotine	1					1		1	2	2	4	1	1	1	14
Myotis sp.	15	14	12	10	5	11		14	18	46	4	3	10	11	173
Leisler's	3		3	2	1	17			52	41	12	1			132
Noctule	116	58	76	126	21	228		297	516	288	188	81	104	217	2316
Nathusius' Pipistrelle	2		1		1			1	1	7	1				14
Common Pipistrelle	237	189	127	156	153	564		181	296	2465	391	103	241	207	5310
Soprano Pipistrelle	250	179	50	103	29	248	3	147	238	614	202	78	54	97	2292
Brown Long-eared	4	3	7	1				2	1	1	5		1		25
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>1069</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>1125</b>	<b>3464</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>10280</b>

## National Bat Monitoring Program (NBMP) Roost Emergence Counts

The NBMP Roost Emergence Count is carried out across the UK, with selected roosts being visited twice in June. Generally one species of bat is counted as they emerge from a maternity roost shortly after sunset. Two roosts were counted by LNC members, Charnwood Lodge (Natterer's \*2) and Chitterman Grange (Brown Long-eared \*2). Elsewhere in Leicestershire and Rutland a number of churches are counted and these can have huge numbers of bats emerging.

The count process is to take up positions where the counters can see all the roost exits, usually against the sky to give more contrast when dark. Where possible, bat detectors are used to confirm the species of each bat emerging.

### NMBP Results

#### Charnwood Lodge Results

Natterer's: 105 on 8 June and 71 on 20 June 2022.

On both counts we had a number of volunteers to cover the multiple roost exits used by the Natterer's. The quantities counted on both dates are down on last year but as that was a record year for the roost, I'm not yet worried that this is a trend.

#### Chitterman Grange Results

Brown Long-eared: nine on 6 June and 11 on 17 June 2022.

Both counts were again low compared to previous years. This is despite the use of an infrared camera system to aid in seeing the bats in the dark. I suspect that the BLE colony is progressively moving to another roost within 200 metres although this has not been proven.

### Active Monitoring

Active monitoring was carried out by one member of the group, Jim Graham. Jim used a

handheld full spectrum bat detector to record the species present in his garden and during a Harp trapping session at Cropston Reservoir on 23 September.

### Cropston Reservoir Results

Common Pipistrelle: two females .

Soprano Pipistrelle: two male and one female.

Nathusius Pipistrelle: one female was ringed.

The National Nathusius Project is attempting to identify roosts of the rare and migratory Nathusius pipistrelle. If any are found they are ringed before release. Other bats caught in the process are identified and released straight away.

### Cropston Village Results

**Summary** of Cropston Village recordings of seven species from 20 nights between 8 March and 14 November.

Myotis species: a total of nine passes from three nights.

Leisler's: a total of 11 passes from four nights with seven on 8 July.

Noctule: a total of 16 passes from five nights with a maximum of five on 8 July.

Nathusius Pipistrelle: nine passes over three nights.

Common Pipistrelle: recorded on every evening with a total of 1564 passes with six of the 20 nights in excess of 100 with a maximum of 229 on 18 July.

Soprano Pipistrelle: recorded on 13 evenings with a total of 187 passes with maximum of 53 on 16 July.

Brown Long-eared: just a single pass on 22 July.

The species recorded are mostly as expected in a village garden except for the Leisler and Nathusius Pipistrelle which are both quite rare.

Cropston Village	08-Mar	09-Mar	11-Mar	14-Mar	15-Mar	19-Mar	02-Jun	08-Jun	16-Jun	21-Jun	22-Jun	08-Jul	09-Jul	11-Jul	12-Jul	16-Jul	18-Jul	23-Jul	11-Nov	14-Nov	Totals	
Myotis sp.								5		2		2										9
Leisler's								1		2	1	7										11
Noctule								2	3	3	3	5										16
Nathusius' Pipistrelle									1	5	3											9
Common Pipistrelle	27	36	27	67	186	14	14	76	183	91	26	166	11	39	164	203	229	2	1	2	1564	
Soprano Pipistrelle		9		6	12		6	2	9	17	2	3		7	52	53	9					187
Brown Long-eared											1											1
Grand Total	27	45	27	73	198	14	20	86	196	120	36	183	11	46	216	256	238	2	1	2	1797	

## Bat Care

Two members of the Club undertake care of grounded and injured bats under the guidance of the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group (LRBG) care coordinator Jenny Harris.

When a member of the public finds a bat that is in trouble, they generally initially call the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline for advice. The helpline then direct the caller to a local contact to offer further advice and/or collect the bat for care.

LRBG have a number of carers spread over the two counties. Dave Robinson and Peter Proudlove cover the Loughborough and NW Leicestershire areas.

Once collected the carer performs a physical check of the bat to determine species, where possible, and care requirements. Water and food is then offered as relevant.

The care required can be as simple as just rehydration up to long term care to allow wing membrane damage to repair. Unfortunately, euthanasia has to sometimes be considered if the bat is badly injured - for example broken bones or internal damage. The largest single cause of bat damage is cat attack and all cat owners are advised to keep cats inside overnight.

Once the bat has recovered it is released as near to the finding site as possible. In the case of pups and juvenile bats an attempt is made to reunite the bat with its mother or at least return to the roost if known.

## Summary of Care

### North-west Leicestershire Results

Common Pipistrelle:

9 March: found on a garage wall waist height at 10:00 had climbed to around 2.2m by 18:00. It was not closing its wings properly. Fed and watered but pink staining in urine so suspected damage caused by cat. Died the following day.

9 March: found outside a garage was underweight and thirsty. Fed and watered, then released near the River Trent on 14 April.

11 July: found inside offices after workers returned from holiday. It was very dehydrated. Rehydration was given but it died overnight.

Soprano Pipistrelle:

8 July: found in a garden where cats are present. There was an open fracture of the right-hand radius, so euthanised.

5 August: found by the main entry to Charnwood Lodge, presumably from the roost in the farm buildings. Fed and watered to increase weight, then sent for flight training via Jenny Harris. Unfortunately, did not fly well and so was euthanised on 15 December, four months after collection.

22 August: found in house but was well enough to be released later that evening by the owner.

19 November: found in outbuilding with torn right wing. Still in care at time of writing.

Pipistrelle species:

21 June: three baby bats returned to their roost.

2 July: baby bat returned to mother.

Brown Long-eared:

29 August: found in garden where cats were present. Fur was matted and dirty and it died overnight.

As expected the vast majority of bats cared for in NW Leicestershire were Common and Soprano Pipistrelles. As can be seen the survival rate is less than 50%. This is unfortunately quite normal.

### Loughborough Results

Common Pipistrelle:

24 March: male weighing 4.46g was found on a drive at a park. It had been there a while and cars were going over it. Alive, but fairly inert, it could be handled without struggle. Was able to feed on small items the next day and whole mealworms the day after. However, became more and more torpid as days went by and died on 12 April.

9 May: male weighing 4.2g had a couple of tiny holes in the wing membrane. Initially a little sluggish, it would allow handling and immediately fed on three mealworms but dies a couple of days later.

11 May: active male weighing 4.4g had a couple of tiny holes in wing membrane along with some blood. Took water but not food and died a few days later.



## BIRDS

18 May: male weighing 4.3g had several small puncture holes in right wing and matted belly fur. Probable cat attack and died overnight.

4 July: brought in by a cat but still quite feisty. Initially slow to feed but had 20 mealworms on 9 July and 27 the following day. Successfully released on the 11th.

15 July: found on the pavement weighing 4.9g. No signs of damage but dehydrated and weak. Took to mealworms and had 30 per evening before being successfully released on 18 July.

29 July: victim of cat attack had a nip around the back of the neck but the wings looked largely OK. Started feeding slowly and was successfully released on 8 August.

Pipistrelle species:

9 July: young bat found on ground below exit of very hot roost. Was kept cool and successfully returned when temperature dropped.

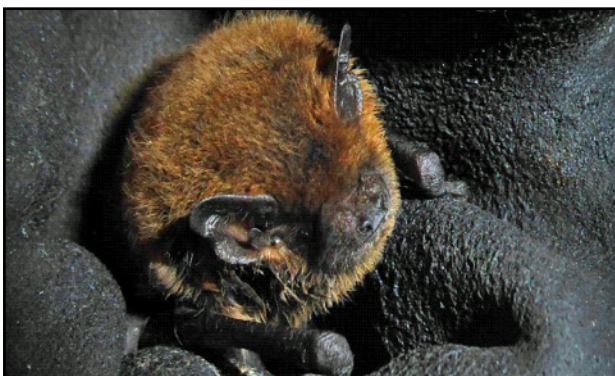
18 July: juvenile male weighing 2.6g had a mite that could not be removed. Was eating well but would not fly on release on the 21st. Tried to release on the 15th August but only flew 20 yards. Passed to Notts Bat Group for flight cage practice. It did not flourish and was euthanised.

20 July: dishevelled adult weighing 3.6g managed to eat 15 mealworms within the hour. Small hole in left wing. Tried to release the following day but would not go. Successfully released on 8 August weighing 4.7g.

10 September: one was taken to Chine House vets but had to be euthanised due to significant neurological damage.

All of bats cared for in Loughborough area were Pipistrelle species. This is quite normal. The survival rate of 50% which is very good.

**Peter Proudlove**



*Common Pipistrelle*



*Teal © Jim Graham*

A few pairs of **Mute Swan** were noted at the end of the quarter. On 22 January there were 49 at Watermead Park and 38 at Groby Pool. Not many were seen elsewhere but they were regular at Groby Pool. The most **Greylag Goose** seen together was 88 adjacent to Hicks Lodge on 31 January. The next highest number was 17 at Cropston Reservoir on 26 March. After 200 with the Greylags at Hicks Lodge the only double-figure counts of **Canada Goose** were 53 at Cropston Reservoir and 16 at Watermead Park both in January. A presumed feral **Barnacle Goose** was with Canada Geese at Ulverscroft on 4 January. Three **Egyptian Geese** were at Groby Pool on 19 January. Two **Shelduck** were at Cossington Meadows on 30 March.

Single numbers of **Mandarin Duck** were seen at Charnwood Lodge with five, Charnwood Water, Thornton and Cropston Reservoirs. On 22 January there were 119 **Wigeon** at Watermead Park with others, in lower numbers, seen at Groby Pool and Hicks Lodge. Together with the Wigeon at Watermead were 176 **Gadwall**, others were at Groby Pool and Cropston Reservoir. The most **Teal** seen throughout the quarter was just 17 at Groby Pool on 22 January. As usual **Mallard** were in all the suitable sites with 146 at Watermead Park on 22 January. On the same day there was a surprising number of 168 **Shoveler** at the same site. No other count was of more than eight. Groby Pool had the most **Pochard** with 46 in February and 27 in March. What was presumably the same long-staying female **Ring-necked Duck** was seen around the area during January and February visiting Dishley Pool and several sites in the Soar Valley. On 22 January there were 358 **Tufted Duck** at Watermead Park



and others were at Groby Pool, Hicks Lodge and Cropston Reservoir. The only **Goldeneye** seen were two at Cropston Reservoir on 12 March. Sixteen **Goosander** at Hicks Lodge on 21 February was the highest number reported. There were six at Cossington Meadows early in the year and others in ones and twos were noted at most of the other waters.

Surprisingly, the only partridge of the quarter was a **Grey Partridge** in Bradgate Park on 28 January. There were no Red-Legged were reported. The most **Pheasant** seen together was just three at Cropston Reservoir.

There were 62 **Cormorant** at Watermead Park on 22 January and 49 at Groby Pool on 12 March. Syston Lake had 25 **Little Egret** on 22 March. Other records were widespread with five at Shackerstone the next highest number. **Great White Egret** were noted at Cossington Meadows, Watermead Park and Groby Pool where two birds were the maximum seen during the quarter. There were exactly the same number of **Grey Heron** reported as Little Egret with a maximum of 11 at Groby Pool on 19 February.

Small numbers of **Little Grebe**, no more than four, were found at Hicks Lodge, Watermead Park, Groby Pool and Cropston Reservoir. The latter site had 11 **Great Crested Grebe** on 26 February and smaller numbers were seen at the same sites as the previous species.

**Red Kites** were noted in 25 areas with four over Bradgate Park on 18 March being the biggest group seen together. There were only 15 records of **Sparrowhawk** with over half of these being seen in Members' gardens. Two were together at Watermead Park on 22 January. There were fewer **Buzzard** records of late with most sightings being of one or two but on 11 March, six were over Bradgate Park. An **Osprey** was over Sence Valley on 18 March. The few **Kestrel** reports were well spread over a dozen sites, all of single birds apart from two at Hicks Lodge on 1 March. Three **Peregrine** were seen at Leicester Cathedral on 23 March, the resident pair and an intruder, and two were over Bradgate Park on 5 January. One was seen on the Carillon in Loughborough on 24 March and other singles were at Groby Pool and Watermead Park.

**Water Rail** were seen or heard at Cossington Meadows, Cropston Reservoir and Watermead Park. **Moorhen** were found at most suitable waters with a maximum of 35 at Watermead Park on 22 January. On the same day there were 18 at Groby Pool. The same two sites on the same date also had the most **Coot** with 226 at Watermead Park and 88 at Groby Pool.

Hicks Lodge had five **Oystercatchers** on 1 March and there were two at Cossington Meadows on 30 March. A **Little Ringed Plover** flew over Ibstock on 20 March and 72 **Lapwing** were over Cropston Reservoir on 28 January. There was a **Jack Snipe** at Kelham Bridge on 2 January. The same site had 35 **Common Snipe** on 3 March (probably the most since the sewage farm days of the 1960s) there were 20 at Charnwood Lodge on 6 February and others at Watermead Park, Groby Pool and Thornton Reservoir. Two **Woodcock** were flushed at Charnwood Lodge on 4 March and a **Curlew** was calling from a field in Cropston on 26 March.



*Black-headed Gull © Jim Graham*

Groby Pool had the majority of the **Black-headed Gull** with a maximum of 500 on 30 January, although there were 350 on the Bradgate Park Ruins Pond on 28 January. There were other double-figure counts on most of the Charnwood reservoirs. A **Mediterranean Gull** was at Sence Valley on 4 March. The most **Common Gull** seen together was ten at Groby Pool on 22 January. **Lesser-black Backed Gull** in twos or threes were occasionally seen at Groby Pool and Cropston Reservoir. The same sites had all the **Herring Gull** with a maximum of 41 at Cropston Reservoir on 26 February. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Watermead Park on 4 January and a **Caspian Gull** there the previous day. Shawell Sand Quarry had an **Iceland Gull** on 31 March.

Almost all of the **Stock Dove** reported were around the Bradgate/Cropston area with four in a Cropston garden the highest count. Amazingly the highest number of **Woodpigeon** was 20 at Syston with only two other double-figure records and **Collared Dove** were only noted in gardens at Coalville, Holwell, Syston Lake and eight at Loughborough.

Single **Barn Owl** were seen at Holwell and Bradgate Park, where the only **Little Owl** was noted on two occasions in March. Gardens at Holwell, Cropston and Loughborough were the only places **Tawny Owl** were seen or heard.

There was a shortage of **Kingfisher** records with the only observations being in Bradgate Park during March.

**Green Woodpecker** were noted in a dozen places with six counted in Bradgate Park twice in late March, and one in a Quorn garden in February. There were far more **Great Spotted Woodpecker** reported, no more than three together and most records from gardens.

**Magpie** were grossly under recorded with only eight observations and **Jay** were only recorded at Cropston, Beacon Hill, Hicks Lodge and Bradgate Park where there were five on 15 March.



*Jackdaw © Jim Graham*

The highest count of **Jackdaw** was 144 in Bradgate Park on 8 February. There was regularly 100 or more around Hugglescote Church and there were other counts of well into two figures. Only six **Rook** were noted, all in Bradgate Park on 27 March. Numerous **Crow** were reported with 50 together in a field at Holwell being the highest number. Small groups of **Raven**, maximum of four, were seen across the whole area.

**Goldcrest** were found at a dozen sites with

five at Syston Lake on 22 February. Most of the larger counts of Blue and Great Tit numbers were from bird ringing sessions. Home Farm at Nanpantan had 39 **Blue Tit** on 2 January and 33 on 28 February, although 31 were counted in Bradgate Park on 4 March. **Great Tit** were not so common with 11 at Home Farm and ten at both Charnwood Lodge and Hicks Lodge. Nine **Coal Tit** were noted in Bradgate Park on 28 February and there were six at Charnwood Lodge in January. A **Marsh Tit** was at Charnwood Lodge on 17 January.

**Skylark** were heard at a dozen sites with Bradgate Park having 14 on 18 March. Most of the other reports were of singles, including one singing over Gilroes cemetery.

The first **Sand Martin** to be reported were at Kelham Bridge where there were four on 17 March. On the 24th there were two at Thornton Reservoir and by the 30th there were 24 at Cossington Meadows and 12 at the artificial wall at Kelham Bridge. The only **Swallow** mentioned were two at Cossington Meadows on 30 March.

**Cetti's Warbler** were heard at Groby Pool in the first two months of the year and at Syston Lake and Kelham Bridge during March.

There were numerous single-figure counts of **Long-tailed Tit** but the most seen was ten at Hicks Lodge, Syston Lake also and Bradgate Park.

Wintering **Chiffchaff** were well reported from various sites, the first being on New Year's Day at Swithland Reservoir. Others were noted throughout the quarter. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** (Tristis race) was at Quorn and Barrow Sewage Farm on 24 January. **Blackcap** were seen in gardens at Coalville and Cropston and also at Groby Pool, all in late March. In my own garden at Hugglescote a male was in the garden daily from 2 January until 25 March and was joined by a female from 21 February until 11 March.

**Nuthatch** were seen in around a dozen sites with four at both Home Farm and Beacon Hill. A garden at Whitwick had a regular visit and by the end of the quarter was "mudding up" a nest box. Four **Treecreeper** were seen or heard in Bradgate Park and singing birds were also heard at Beacon Hill, Groby Pool and Thornton Reservoir.

**Wren** were widespread with 12 regularly heard in Bradgate Park in March.

There were not many **Starling** records but 400 were seen at Walton, Harborough on 12 March.

**Blackbird**, as usual were at all sites and habitats but only one double-figure count, 13 at Thornton Reservoir on 10 March. There were a few single figure counts of **Fieldfare** but 150 were in trees in JG's garden at Cropston on 28 January. **Song Thrush** were only seen in single or small numbers but seven were noted in Bradgate Park on 18 March. **Redwing** numbers seem to be up on Fieldfare with 100 at Bosworth Battlefield on 7 February and 200 at Thrussington on 26 February. On 26 March there were 200 in and around JGr's garden at Holwell. There were only four sites where **Mistle Thrush** were reported, these were Groby Pool, Syston Lakes, Beacon Hill and Bradgate Park where four were heard on a few occasions.



*Robin © Jim Graham*

As usual **Robin** were widespread with counts of 13 at Hicks Lodge on 1 March and 16 in Bradgate Park on 18 March. **Stonechat** seem to be well established in the area now with three pairs in Bradgate Park and two pairs at Charnwood Lodge in late February.

As usual, **Dunnock** were well reported in small numbers but there were ten at Syston Lake on 22 February. A lot of the records were of garden birds. **House Sparrow** seem to be more common of late, certainly around Quorn with 100 noted on three different occasions. Other records were of 20 or more birds together.

One or two **Grey Wagtail** were found in suitable wet areas around the reservoirs etc., but one was seen in the Tesco car park in Ashby.

There were far fewer **Pied Wagtail** records than the previous species, most of which were in Bradgate Park. The suitable heathland areas had **Meadow Pipits** with 108 in Bradgate Park on 15 February. Others were seen at Cropston with 38 on 19 March and 25 at Hicks Lodge on 1 March.

There were 25 **Chaffinch** at Thurcaston on 10 February and a remarkable 128 in Bradgate Park on 19 February. Other records were all of single numbers. Surprisingly there were only two sightings of **Brambling** this quarter, three in Bradgate Park on 19 February and one in my garden on 8 March. The most **Greenfinch** seen together were in a Cropston garden with 12 on 16 March. Of the other records most were also in gardens. **Goldfinch** were also seen regularly in gardens with quite a few double-figure counts but the most seen together was 21 at Quorn on 5 March. There were ten **Siskin** in Bradgate Park on 5 January and other singles around the area but the highest count was 26 in a Cropston garden on 8 March.



*Linnet © Jim Graham*

**Linnet** were only seen at Cropston, Jubilee Park and Bradgate Park where there were 17 on 15 February. Apart from singles in a few gardens the only sizeable **Lesser Redpoll** group was 21 in Bradgate Park on 5 January. No more than two **Bullfinch** were seen together but only at seven sites.

The most **Yellowhammer** seen together was in Bradgate Park where there were 22 on 19 February. All other sightings but one, at Cropston, were also from Bradgate. **Reed Bunting** were only found at five sites with no more than two together.

**Bas Forgham**



## REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS

Records were received for just two species.

**Common Frog** *Rana temporaria*: the first record of the year was six in PJD neighbours pond on 12 March with over 50 there on the 17th. The first spawn noted in JGs garden was on the 23rd, whilst four were in PJDs pond on the 25th.

**Slow-worm** *Anguis fragilis*: all activity was recorded around PJD's garden or nearby. A "small one" was found on 19 February, whilst three "large ones" were seen on 3 March, with another in a different area the following day.

Jim Graham

## FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

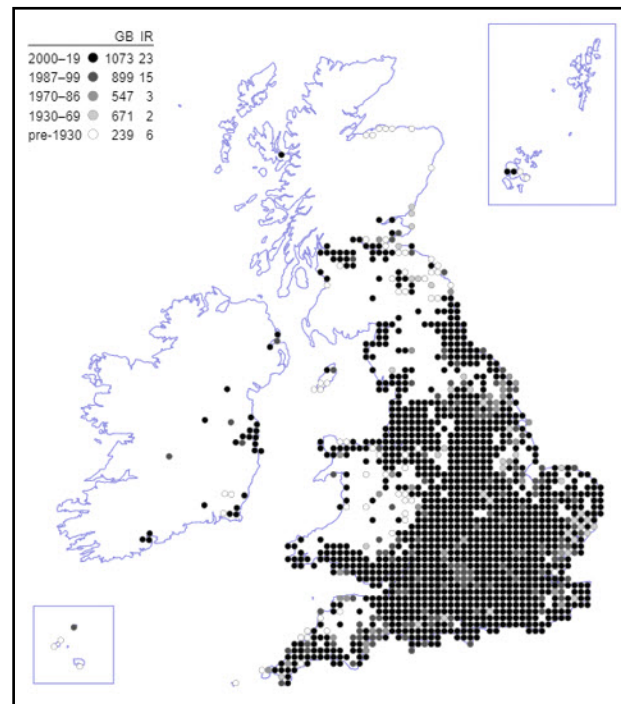
Before starting the systematic account, I must mention a national event of great significance to field botanists – the publication of *Plant Atlas 2020* (Stroh et al., 2023). This is the third atlas covering Britain and Ireland at the hectad scale (10 km squares) and is based on 26 million records submitted by 8500 botanists (mostly volunteers). HI and SFW attended the presentations and cake cutting at Cambridge on 18 March. Having contributed nearly 100,000 records from VC55, we felt we had earned some cake! The maps, graphics and species accounts are available on a superb web site (<https://plantatlas2020.org/>) as well as being published in a sumptuous book of 1524 pages (two-volumes). A 32-page summary entitled *Britain's Changing Flora* can be found on the web site. To illustrate what the Atlas shows, I have incorporated extracts into the following summaries of local records for this quarter.

Four members have submitted 1502 records of 306 taxa. The majority are from myself and HI and these have been accepted by the VC Recorder and uploaded to the BSBI database.

The most widely-recorded fern this quarter was Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium*, with 14 records from SFW and HG. As the only fern with an elongated, undivided leaf it is easy to identify and can be found along shady ditches, by leaky downpipes on churches, on railway bridges and beneath the grids in road drains. In Messenger's *Flora of Rutland* (1971), only one plant of Rustyback fern is reported, last

seen in 1968 at Essendine. On an excursion to that village on 27 March, this fern was locally frequent on a wall. This species has turned up at half a dozen other locations in Rutland and is doing well in Leicestershire, too.

An unusually early flower in a Melton Mowbray car park on 3 February was keyed out to Tall Melilot *Melilotus altissimus* on the basis of the relative length of the various petals. The map shows it to be widespread in southern Britain, but I do not see (or recognise?) it often.

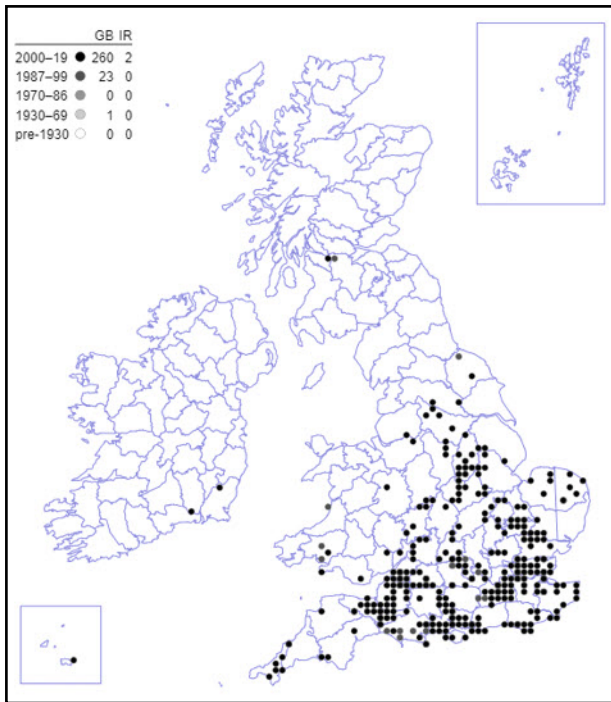


*The national distribution of Tall Melilot shows a preference for the English lowlands. Melilotus altissimus Thuill. in BSBI Online Plant Atlas 2020, eds P.A. Stroh, T. A. Humphrey, R.J. Burckmar, O.L. Pescott, D.B. Roy, & K.J. Walker. <https://plantatlas2020.org/atlas/2cd4p9h.1fn> [Accessed 22/05/2023]*

I have learned to recognise last year's dead shoots of Perforate St John's-wort *Hypericum perforatum*. The slender, stiff shoots are reddish-brown, round in section with a pair of opposite ridges. The candelabra-shaped inflorescence often persists. I made five records on roadside verges and a railway cutting.

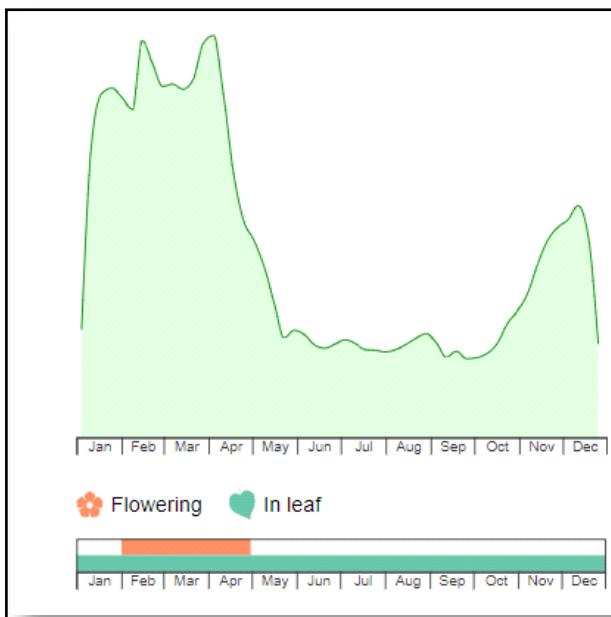
Balkan Spurge *Euphorbia oblongata* did not feature in the last *Flora of Leicestershire* (Primavesi & Evans, 1988) but in recent years it has been escaping from gardens and getting about, for example near Keepers Cottage in Shackerstone parish on 26 February. It is not a native plant, but classified as a neophyte because it was introduced after AD 1500.





On this map, I selected the option to show vice-counties. Balkan Spurge is thinly spread across England but with clusters in London, Nottingham and Cambridge and elsewhere – perhaps where keen urban recorders are alert to it.

Only one record of Mistletoe *Viscum album* was submitted, for a plant seen in a tree beside the A47 near Barrowden. Fair weather botanists may be overlooking Mistletoe (see chart), nonetheless it does seem to be increasing both nationally and in VC55 (notably, Loughborough).



Contrary to most plants, Mistletoe is most visible before trees come into leaf, as clearly demonstrated by the Apparency/Phenology charts from the Plant Atlas 2020.

Russian-vine *Fallopia baldschuanica* is related to docks and knotweeds and was recorded from Thrussington. It flowers in the autumn but can be recognised from the leaves, withered flowers and its habit of climbing up tall hedges. This species was introduced into British gardens in 1896 and frequently escapes.

Red Dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum* seems to have been particularly conspicuous this year. It was recorded from 15 widespread localities, and present at many more (but unrecorded by SFW because recent records already existed). Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum* is similar but the teeth on the leaves are more prominent. This was seen near Burton on the Wolds on 3 February but the photograph was taken at Lount in April, as it shows both species.



Red and Cut-leaved Dead-nettles © Steve Woodward

Perhaps the most satisfying record for this quarter was made on 27 March by HI, at Essendine in Rutland, where she drew my attention to some unusually wrinkly leaves on a roadside verge by a housing estate (Plover Road). I did not recognise them but Vice-county Recorder Geoffrey Hall thought they may be Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca* (Locally Scarce). As



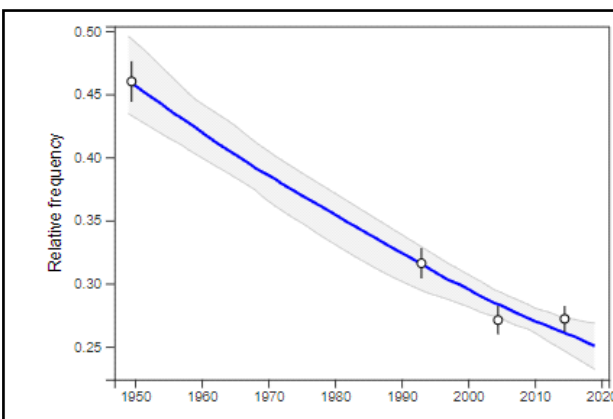
The uninspiring location of Wild Clary at Essendine



Leaves of Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca* © Steve Woodward

I was working on this article today, an email arrived from Martin Grimes (RNHS) with a photo of the plants in flower, confirming GH's ID. There is a well-known population at Croft Pasture NR, otherwise I have never found this species anywhere else in VC55. Messenger (1971) reports a record from Essendine in 1967, but the only recent from Rutland was in another hectad. So here is another reward for searching "unexceptional" habitats at the "wrong" time of year!

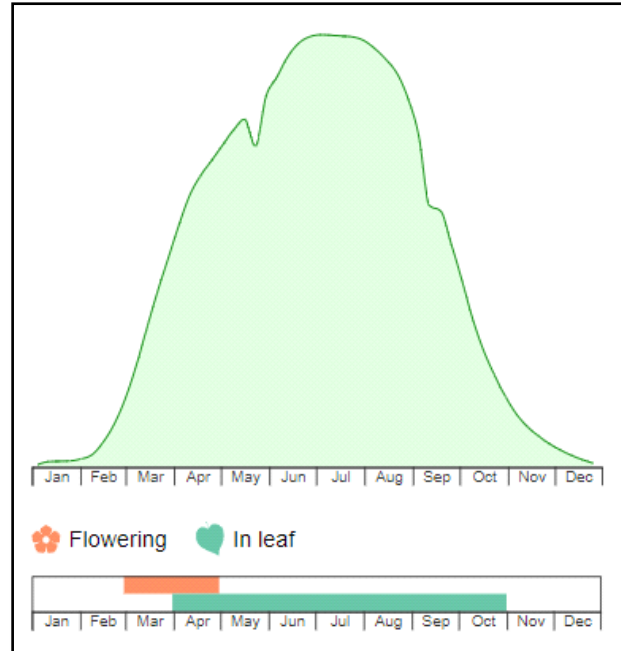
Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* has short, stiff shoots whose yellow heads often persist through the winter. It was found on 27 March near Ketton, where it is encouraged by the limestone. Nationally, this species has declined due to habitat destruction and the lapse of grazing (see chart).



Plant Atlas 2020 shows a decline in the frequency of Carline Thistle. The vertical scale is an index resulting from a statistical process to remove bias due to varying recorder effort over the years and across different areas.

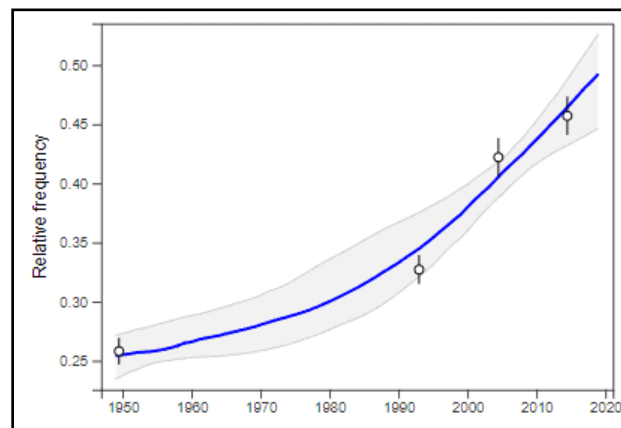
Colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara* is one of the first yellow composites to bloom (see chart) and MM found some at Charnwood Lodge NNR on 30

March. Its leaves were formerly used to make cough medicine (Mabey, 1996).



Flowering is brief, but the hoof-shaped leaves of Colt's-foot remain recognisable for much of the year and can often be spotted though binoculars in quarries and demolition sites where access is denied.

I have been reporting in *Heritage* the spread of Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera* locally and Plant Atlas 2020 confirms that this is a National trend (see chart below). My three local records of leaf rosettes were the A453 near Donington Services, a mown verge at Essendine and two found on the Club outing to Sence Valley Forest Park on 1 February.



One of the few good news stories about British Orchids is the northward spread of the Bee Orchid, helped by climate change.

**Steve Woodward**



## References

- Mabey, R., 1996. *Flora Britannica*. Sinclair-Stevenson. 377.
- Messenger, K.G. 1971. *Flora of Rutland*. Leicester Museums.
- Primavesi, A.L. & Evans, P.A. (eds.). 1988. *Flora of Leicestershire*. Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service.
- Stroh, P.A., Walker, K.J, Humphrey, T.A., Pescott, O.L. & Burkmar, R.J. 2023. *Plant Atlas 2020. Mapping Changes in the Distribution of the British and Irish Flora*. BSBI/Princeton.

## WEATHER

**January** was a month of two halves. The first was very mild and wet with low pressure and strong south-west winds. After mid-month, the weather changed completely as high pressure took control giving us dry and fine days with plenty of sunshine at times but also the return of night frosts. Afternoon temperatures averaged 8.2°C at both Dean Whittaker's station in Hinckley and my recording site in Mountsorrel which was 1°C above normal. Nighttime temperatures were logged at 1.9°C which was the expected figure but the mild nights were all in the first half of the month with most of the frosty nights after the 15th. There were nine consecutive frosts between the 17th and 25th of the month. The average temperature for both stations was 5°C or 0.4°C above normal with the cold second half to the month largely cancelling out the very mild first half. So once again January has been a warmer month than it used to be historically. Steve Jackson at his site at Bablake School in Coventry has calculated that January temperatures have risen by 0.4°C since the turn of the century so continuing the trend



Carlton School House Weathervane © Steve Woodward

of upward trajectory in terms of temperature in every month since the year 2000.

The pattern of rainfall was also very different with almost all the month's rainfall falling in the first fortnight with the second fortnight being almost completely dry as high pressure established itself. Dean recorded 48.8mm for the month in Hinckley or 80% of the usual total while in Mountsorrel I logged 51.4mm or 84% of the usual figure. Only three January months have been drier in the last ten years namely in 2015, 2019 and 2022.

In terms of sunshine, January did well with 86 hours being recorded in Mountsorrel which was 36% above normal, with virtually all this occurring in the second half of the month. Only two months have recorded more sunshine than 2023 since 1895 namely 2000 and 2001.

The very mild and wet first half the month produced almost 50mm at both stations. The wettest days of the month were the 10th and 14th at Mountsorrel when 15mm and 11mm fell respectively. Dean at Hinckley also recorded 12mm on the 14th. The mildest day at both stations was recorded on the 4th when 13°C was logged, double the usual figure. Nighttime temperatures were also high with our mildest night recorded on the 4th, with a minimum of 9.7°C in Hinckley, which was much higher than it should have been in the daytime let alone the night! It was windy at times with our maximum gust of 42mph on the 12th.

The 16th provided the most dramatic weather event for some of us when we had a heavy thunder snow shower move south across Leicestershire at lunchtime, with areas to the north of the city seeing 2cm of snow with accompanying thunder and lightning. The cold air this brought then stayed for ten days. There was no further snow to speak of but once again as in December a string of cold nights. The lowest nighttime temperature was recorded on the 17th in Hinckley with -5.4°C and in Mountsorrel on the 22nd I logged -6.2°C my coldest January night for two years.

The position of the high pressure began to change and milder air spread in for the end of the month. So all in all, not too disruptive a weather month with a mixture of rain and sunshine but very little snow so far this winter.

**February** was the driest month we have had for 25 years locally, and at Dave Mutton's station in Cosby his 9mm was the driest in his record since 1959! High pressure dominated for virtually the entire month as it sat over or near to the British Isles. As you would expect rainfall totals were very low. Dave recorded just 9mm out of the expected 48mm. At Mountsorrel, I logged just 9.9mm and Dean Whittaker at his Hinckley station recorded 8.4mm or just 17% of his expected figure. Steve Jackson has noted that for his Coventry site it was the driest since 1998 with just 7.1mm of rain. Only four February months have been drier than that since 1870: 1891, 1921, 1959 and 1998.

The position of the high pressure meant that for most of the time mild-Atlantic sourced winds affected us with just a colder spell in the second week. Average afternoon temperatures reached 10.2°C at Mountsorrel and Hinckley with nighttime temperatures being logged at 3.2°C. There were eight air frosts recorded in the month. The average temperature of 6.7°C which is 1.7°C above normal once again put February in the very mild category.

Steve at his site at Bablake School in Coventry, where he has access to over 130 years of records, has noted the last five Februarys have all been above average. Only seven February months have been warmer than this year since 1892 and five of these in the last 60 years namely 1990, 1997, 1998, 2002 and 2022. It is also interesting to note that since 1990 February's temperature has risen on average by 1.3°C which is a familiar pattern identified too in many other months in this time frame. There were no days with snow falling in February the first time since 1997.

The position of the high pressure varied slightly but on some days very high sunshine totals were recorded. The monthly total recorded by Steve in Coventry amounted to 110 hours which was 34% higher than normal. Long term sunshine figures have risen markedly in recent decades with the average 84 hours recently being 60% higher than the case in the 19th century.

The weather pattern for the entire month was unusually the same with the high being centred around the British Isles.

Most of the time, this allowed for some cold nights in the first week with temperatures down to -3.5°C on the 7th with six consecutive frosts. The second week got much warmer and 15.6°C was recorded on the 17th, then Dean in Hinckley logged 15.8°C on the 20th; our warmest day of the month. Rain really fell on just two days, the 22nd which saw 5.4mm in Mountsorrel and the 28th when 2mm was recorded.

Winter as a whole this year was milder, drier but sunnier than usual. It was the driest winter since 2016/17 and the sunniest since 2007/8. The only winter with more sunshine than 2022/23 since records began in 1894 locally.

**March** was exceptionally wet for all of us and it also brought our first significant snowfall in the meteorological spring!

After the mainly benign weather in late January and February, March brought us very different weather. Low pressure dominated for the entire month and this was the cause of all the rain. Around 50mm is expected to fall in a typical March across the Midlands but in this month I recorded 130mm in Mountsorrel, with Dean in Hinckley logging 125mm with 125.2mm also falling at the MET office site at Bablake School in Coventry. These figures are nearly three times the expected figures. Steve, who has 153 years of rainfall data, said this one was the second wettest ever recorded, narrowly coming second to 1947 which had 1mm more at 126.6mm. Nationally, it was the wettest March since 1981 but it ranked 3rd in long-term records going back to 1862.

It was a month of two halves once again in terms of temperature. The first was cold as the high pressure that had remained over the British Isles for six weeks, finally moved north to Greenland. This allowed cold Arctic air to flood southwards and this brought us some significant snow for the first time in the season. I recorded 4cm on both the 9th and then after some melting snow returned next morning to give a widespread cover of up to 5cm. The 9th saw temperatures rise to just 1.6°C making this our coldest day of the month. The heavy wet snow caused a lot of disruption as early rain washed off the salt on the roads allowing the snow to settle. Traffic conditions were very challenging and many schools closed as staff struggled to





March Weather © Jim Graham

get in. The heavy snow soon melted in the spring sunshine however, and 20mm of rain and snow were recorded in Mountsorrel on Thursday and Friday and then some flooding occurred which then happened frequently again in the subsequent three very wet weeks which followed. The second half of the month was much milder with our warmest day of the month being recorded on the 30th when Dean logged 16.6°C in Hinckley as milder winds arrived from the south-west.

The average afternoon maximum was logged at 10°C in Mountsorrel and 10.2°C in Hinckley with night temperatures of 3.6°C with Dean and 4°C in Mountsorrel. The overall mean of 7°C was within a fraction of normal. So once again, for the third month running, contrasting fortnights of temperature in each month helped the overall averages to be close to the monthly norms.

Looking at the long term trends, March's temperature has risen from 5.7°C to 6.7°C over the last 100 years, and since 2017 they have averaged 7.3°C so the long term warming appears to be continuing.

March was also a very dull month. Steve recorded just 83 hours of sunshine in Coventry during the month, just 66% of the expected figure. It has been the dulllest March locally since 1998 when 82 hours were logged. Only four March months have been duller than this in the last 40 years.

Many thanks to Steve Jackson, Dean Whittaker and Dave Mutton for their help in compiling this report.

**Phil Morrish**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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

Mick Braker, Ben Croxtall, Rhys Dandy, Pam Darby, Graham Fisher, Bas Forgham, Jim Graham (JG), Sue Graham, Dave Gray, Jackie Green (JGr), Helen Ikin (HI), Nigel Judson, Margaret McLoughlin (MM), Stuart Moffat, Kate Moore, David Robinson, Steve Woodward (SFW).

We are very grateful to them all.

Records for the next quarter should preferably be entered via NatureSpot as soon as possible. Please ensure that you select "Loughboro' Nats" Project and set the padlock. Alternatively email a simple spreadsheet or text document to Margaret McLoughlin at:

[loughboroughnaturalists.records@gmail.com](mailto:loughboroughnaturalists.records@gmail.com)

.....  
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 Margaret McLoughlin, until a batch is ready to go to the Record Office.