

Loughborough Naturalists' Club



www.loughboroughnats.org

Common Spotted-orchid © Steve Woodward; Striped Tubic © Margaret McLoughlin;
Lesser Stag Beetle © Graham Finch; Fox © Jim Graham.



Annual Report 2022

LOUGHBOROUGH NATURALISTS' CLUB

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

as at 30 November 2022

President	Ms H Ikin
COMMITTEE	
Chair	Mrs H Graves
Vice-chair	Vacant
Honorary Secretary	Mrs S Graham
Honorary Treasurer	Miss ML McLoughlin
Membership Secretary	Mr G Fisher
Indoor Meetings Co-ordinator	Mrs P Darby
Outdoor Meetings Co-ordinator	Mr P Proudlove
Members	Mr M Buckley Mr J Graham Mr P Wilkinson Mr S Woodward
OTHER OFFICERS	
<i>Heritage</i> Editorial Panel	Mr S Woodward Mr J Graham Miss ML McLoughlin
Librarian	Ms H Ikin
Records Co-ordinator	Miss ML McLoughlin

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2022

The Loughborough Naturalists' Club has several strings to its bow.

- We enjoy monthly indoor meetings with a focus on learning about a range of natural history topics both from home and abroad, from visiting speakers or our own Members.
- We enjoy monthly outdoor meetings to a local venue of interest with an emphasis on recording.
- Many Members record individually and these records are collated by the Club and used to write the Club bulletin, *Heritage*.
- We have a new ongoing recording project. An idea of past projects can be seen by looking at the publications list on our website. The most recent project, now completed, has resulted this year in the publication of "More Than Meets The Eye, the Wildlife of Grace Dieu, Leicestershire" by Steve Woodward & Helen Ikin.

Indoor Meetings

2022 was another strange year. The Covid pandemic was being managed to some extent by the miraculous development of vaccines at accelerated speed. Masks and distancing also helped reduce the spread. The Club Committee had decided that, despite more freedoms to meet indoors, for 2022 we would maintain our monthly series of talks by Zoom, to help protect our more vulnerable members and to give an opportunity for those still unwilling or unable to meet indoors a continuing opportunity to access the programme. There was ongoing discussion amongst the Committee about the timing of our indoor meetings season. Many of the Zoom talks were held on Wednesdays instead of the traditional Saturday evenings. It was easy to alternate these talks because of the lack of need to book a hall. However, it was decided that to return to the Hall for 2023 we would return to Saturday night bookings. Some Committee Members feel that Saturday night is not the best night for many of our existing Members and for attracting new Members and speakers. We would welcome your opinions on this. The 2022 talks were very varied and all well received. A full list can be seen under Club Activities in this Report. Many thanks to Pam Darby for organising such an interesting range of speakers.

Outdoor Meetings

We were however, ready to engage more fully with our outdoor meetings, although the numbers were still limited, in order to give Members a chance to socially distance themselves from others. We continued with a system of bookings taken by our Outdoors Meetings Coordinator, Peter Proudlove. Reminders of all the walks were sent by email and also published in the Newsletter. We all agreed that taking bookings for the walks was an improvement in that leaders knew in advance how many Members to expect and could sometimes wait a few minutes if someone was late. This year the Club has decided to really "push" to encourage our Members to fulfil the mantra of the Club, "Recording the Wildlife of Charnwood and the Surrounding Areas". Our Secretary, Sue Graham, has routinely taken notes on our walks in order to write a report for the quarterly newsletter. We are encouraging our Members to be really engaged on the walks and to pass on records of whatever they see to Sue, to make the list as comprehensive as possible. We are making more effort to get all those records entered more officially onto our recording system. All of the walks were well attended. Many thanks to Peter Proudlove for organisation and to those Members who volunteered to lead. Also to Sue Graham and other Members who provide interesting résumés of the walks for the Newsletter. A full list can be seen under Club Activities in this Report.

General Recording

Moving onto recording in general, the Club has made changes to its recording system. Previously, all records were submitted to Helen Ikin, Records Co-ordinator, on paper or electronically, to be sorted and sent to the *Heritage* writers. A new system has been instigated whereby Members are encouraged to submit records to NatureSpot using the 'Loughborough Nats Project' tab. Members are still welcome to submit records on paper and electronically directly to the new Records Co-ordinator Margaret McLoughlin. This change has coincided with a change of the Records' Coordinator. Helen Ikin decided to step down after many years faithful service in a very demanding role, and Margaret McLoughlin was encouraged to take up this role, which she is now also managing admirably. One advantage of the recording system via NatureSpot is that records are verified often by national experts, mostly before they are used for *Heritage*, and from NatureSpot they are shared directly with Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC), without the Club's Records Co-ordinator needing to send in the Club's data. We are aware that some of the paper records sent to LRERC have not yet been transferred to the database for ease of use. For various reasons *Heritage* had become delayed but now we are virtually back on track with the quarterly editions. Some of our previous writers have retired and new Members are now taking over some of the roles. For example, Peter Proudlove is writing the new and fascinating Bat Report, Helen Shacklock has stepped up to the Butterfly Report and Margaret McLoughlin has taken on the Fungus Report. There are plenty of opportunities for Members to also become involved in writing for *Heritage*. Please volunteer your services and discuss with the Editorial Panel if you feel you can help. Many thanks to Helen for the smooth transfer to the new Records Co-ordinator. Many thanks to Margaret for collating and disseminating records to writers. Many thanks to Jim and Steve for proofreading and editing the articles, and to Jim for publication.

It has been a very rewarding year for the Club in terms of Members' publications. "More Than Meets The Eye: The Wildlife of Grace Dieu, Leicestershire" was published, and has received enthusiastic response from all who have seen it, and good sales. It is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in the wildlife of the Midlands, especially Charnwood Forest. Steve and Helen undertook a massive surveying effort over many years, aided and abetted by Club Members, to provide the data on which this book is based. Congratulations to Steve and Helen and the Club in general for this superb publication.

Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin have also made tremendous efforts recording Vascular Plants in our counties, contributing widely to the newly published "Leicestershire and Rutland Rare Plant Register" by Geoffrey Hall and Stephen Woodward. Much recording took place in our counties in the 2010s in preparation for the BSBI 2020 Atlas, due to be published in 2023. The County Plant Recorders, Geoffrey Hall, Steve Woodward and Russell Parry, organised botanists, including some of our Members, to record plants across the county on a tetrad by tetrad basis. This was the foundation for the data for this book, on which Steve and Helen and others built to provide a more detailed monad recording of the counties. The book is an essential reference "to inform conservation decisions". The Club is proud of the involvement of its Members in this publication and is pleased to have contributed to the cost of publication.

Project

After several months of detailed planning, the Club was able to commence a project at the organically-farmed Home Farm Nanpantan in February 2022. The overall aim of this project is to record as much wildlife as our Members are able to identify on regular visits. The farm had previously received much attention from the plant surveyors of the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust, who had apportioned the area into compartments which we have continued to

use for further study. The main focus in the first year has been on recording night-flying moths, bats, beetles, and birds both on transects and by ringing. Good records of uncommon species have been found. Many other groups such as butterflies, fungi, bugs, have been studied more casually on regular visits. The plan is to expand and record more groups in future years with an interim report to be published after three years. Anyone interested in helping with this project is welcome to contact us. Please note that all visits must be booked in advance with agreement from the farmer. We were delighted that we have been able to receive grant money from the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme to support some of the costs e.g. bird rings, and a generator for mothing evenings.

Conclusion

The Club has had another good year. The Covid pandemic was very worrying, not just for the wellbeing of our Members but also for the welfare of the Club. However, we have managed to keep the Club afloat on the Zoom meetings and Field Outings and are in a good position to face the future with optimism.

One word of caution. Some members of the Committee have served for many years. We have a vacancy in the Vice-chair role and have had for several years. Pam Darby wishes to step down from her role as Indoor Meetings Co-ordinator at the AGM April 2023. I also wish to stand down, but at the AGM 2024 (if I am re-elected for another one-year term). The Club needs Members to come forward to volunteer for these roles, or to join the Committee as Ordinary Members, hopefully in preparation for taking on the Officer roles in the future.

Finally, thanks to all the Committee who have enabled the Club to continue throughout these difficult times. To Sue Graham, Honorary Secretary, for keeping minutes of our Committee Meetings and records of both indoor and outdoor meetings for publication in the Newsletters, and many other contributions. To Margaret McLoughlin, Honorary Treasurer, for keeping our accounts up-to-date and in good order and providing financial advice to the Club, and also taking on the role of Records Co-ordinator. To Helen Ikin for her role as Records Co-ordinator over many years, now enjoying a well-earned retirement from that role. To Graham Fisher, Membership Secretary, for welcoming new Members, for keeping our membership list up-to-date, and emailing our Members with details of indoor and outdoor meetings. To Pam Darby, Indoor Meetings Co-ordinator, for arranging such an excellent lecture series. To Peter Proudlove, Outdoor Meetings Co-ordinator, for efficiently co-ordinating the arrangements of our Wednesday morning walks, often followed by lunch at a nearby venue. To Jim Graham and Steve Woodward for the continued publication of our excellent Club bulletin *Heritage*. To all the other Committee Members whose support and advice is invaluable throughout the year. And finally, to all the Members of our Club who continue to provide the records on which *Heritage* is based.

Hazel Graves
Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2022

It is again my pleasure to present this years' overview of the Financial Report to the AGM. Full account copies are available should anyone wish to see them, and a full signed copy will be lodged with the AGM documents.

Two increases in workload have been firstly due to the publishing, sale and distribution of More Than Meets The Eye (hereafter MTMTE). We engaged a professional Book Shop, Summerfields, to be our retailer, which unfortunately entails making a small loss per copy but relieving us of a great deal of administration. The figure removed from the NS&I account represents the total printing cost, postage and ancillary costs. Sales have gone really well but I cannot fully report until the current stock has been sold. At the end of the financial period we held 35 books at a unit cost of £13.76, totalling £481.60.

The second section of work follows the successful award of funds towards equipment for the Home Farm Project. We have to provide a full return to the awardees and will not make any profit or loss. These funds are currently held and spent from the Nat West account. That above project amount plus the money raised back from MTMTE sales makes the Current Account figure look unusually healthy. When complete the money will be returned to the NS&I account.

We are showing a loss, BUT if you remove all the MTMTE figures the year on year costs would show a surplus figure of £142.44. We continue to be in a *relatively* healthy position, but this will change with the Clubs return to Indoor Meetings and its associated costs.

I again proposed to the Committee that there is no increase in the Membership fee for this year and thus present this report for your scrutiny and comments. Thank you.

M.L. McLoughlin

Simplified Income and Expenditure for 2022

Income	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	Expenditure	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
Subscriptions	£880.50	£962.50	Affiliations & Subscriptions	£70.00	£70.00
Miscellaneous Sales	£0.00	£25.00	Speakers' Fees	£190.00	£315.00
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	£196.41	£262.21	Hire of Room, Meetings	£0.00	£0.00
Entrance Charges (Zoom)	£5.00	£45.00	Printing	£176.26	£143.20
Donations	£63.00	£26.00	Postage	£150.55	£116.41
Sale of MTMTE	£1,472.50	n/a	Insurance	£201.04	£201.04
			Equipment	£168.40	£60.47
			Web Domain (3 years)	£46.62	£14.34
			MTMTE expenses	£2,122.95	n/a
			Zoom Licence(s)	£0.00	£100.00
TOTALS	£2,617.41	£1,364.41		£3,125.42	£1,020.46
+Surplus / -Deficit	-£508.01	+£300.25			

<u>Balances 31 Nov 2022</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Notes:</u>
Cash in Hand	52.34	14.34	
NatWest Current Account	6547.45	3,596.92	
NS&I account	6306.10	8,436.05	
Current Assets	£12,905.89	£12,047.31	

Produced by: ML McLoughlin 16 March 2023

Checked by: AB Bass 16 March 2023

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2022

There have been some anxious and challenging times as we have emerged slowly, but surely, from the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Everyone on the LNC Committee has played their part in ensuring that the Club has transitioned as smoothly as possible back to 'normality', not least with the welcome reinstatement of the Indoor Meetings, Wednesday Morning Walks and getting our flagship publication *Heritage* back on track. This has all involved considerable communication, coordination and teamwork and the results are reflected in the continuing healthy state of the Club, both financially and in terms of a loyal and stable Membership.

In her Chairman's Report, Hazel has comprehensively covered the activities of the Club and acknowledged the good work of the Committee Members. There is however one person missing from these acknowledgements and that is Hazel herself. It is fair to say that without Hazel's leadership, enthusiasm and determination during the long period of Lockdown and beyond, the Club would have been in a much more precarious position. Instead she has helped to steer and propel us in innovative and exciting ways to embrace all Members and reinforce the value of recording whilst staying faithful to the original aims of the Club.

The vacancies we have on the Committee are important to fill in order to keep this momentum going and reduce the combined workload on our Officers. I would therefore strongly urge our Members to consider putting themselves forward, for the position of Committee Member, Editorial Committee Member, Indoor Meetings Co-ordinator or Vice Chair in order to lend support to our much valued and respected natural history club, thus ensuring our survival in future.

Sue Graham

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2022

Whilst we have had more success in retaining new Members in recent times, no doubt aided by an increase in recording activities and other opportunities, we did not have a good year for recruitment in 2022, no doubt in part due to continued effects of COVID on face to face events and talks. Hopefully the worst of that is now behind us.

Sadly we also learned last year of the death of five long-standing Members, who will all be greatly missed. By the end of the year we were 82 Memberships strong and we have had an encouraging start to the current year.

We are very grateful to those who have already renewed their Membership for 2023 – at the time of writing we have received the subscriptions of almost three quarters of our Members. Subscriptions are always due on 1 January each year regardless of the time of year you joined – unless this was in the last three months of the previous year, when your following year's subscriptions are included. If you are amongst the quarter that has so far overlooked your renewal, we hope you will forgive this reminder.

As usual, please forward you cheque or other payment to me. You can also hand your subscription in person to any of the Committee by cheque or in cash or pay by bank transfer if you prefer, or you may wish to set up an annual standing order to avoid overlooking this task.

Rates again remain unchanged at just £12 for Full Membership or £17 for Joint Membership (including additional person at the same address). Despite rising costs, we have managed to keep subscriptions stable for over ten years, in part because of the savings we have been able to make by emailing your *Heritage* and Newsletter where possible. This not only keeps down your subscription, but also gives you a full colour version of the publication and a more timely delivery, especially in these times of unreliable post!

If you require any assistance regarding Membership or have a query regarding your subscription, please contact the membership secretary, Graham Fisher (tel. 01509-890077 or email grahamfisher59@gmail.com). Please also be sure to let us know if you change your contact details, especially your email address, so we can keep our records up-to-date and ensure you continue to receive your regular newsletter and *Heritage* publication and also keep you informed about talks, walks and other items of interest.

Finally, if you have not done so already and are able, please consider Gift Aiding your subscription to enable us to reclaim an additional 25% of your subscription from the tax man! Please contact me for a form.

Graham Fisher

HERITAGE REPORT

It has been a gargantuan effort to get *Heritage* back on track with quarterly editions and we are almost there. We would like to thank everyone for your understanding whilst we resolved the numerous issues over the period.

You will have noticed that the method of collecting and collating Club records has changed and is now co-ordinated by Margaret McLoughlin. The vast majority are now coming through in electronic format either as a spreadsheet or via the dedicated NatureSpot recording system which we now have up and running. We do however, still welcome all and any of your records in whatever format and are aware that some Members still prefer to use pen and paper.

You will also have noticed that there have been a few changes in the species authors. Some of our long-standing writers are now unable to continue or have stepped back from the task. We would like to thank them for the time and energy that they have shown to the Club over the years. We welcome a couple of new names to our writers list and new species accounts. Peter Proudlove is writing a comprehensive Bat account, Margaret McLoughlin has taken on Fungus, Hazel Graves writes Galls and Hoverflies, and Jim Graham has added Mammals and Amphibians/Reptiles to his portfolio.

But we would not be able to produce *Heritage* without your records, so a special thank you to all Club Members and friends who take the time to send in their records.

The Editorial Team

PUBLICATIONS

The long-awaited Grace Dieu report “More Than Meets The Eye” was published during the year and has been exceptionally well received. Congratulations to Steve and Helen, it is a publication of exceptional quality and the result complements the tremendous effort to bring it to fruition.

A full list of publications and downloads are available on the Club’s website:

www.loughboroughnats.org/publications

CLUB ACTIVITIES DIARY FOR 2022

Despite Covid-19 restrictions being eased but unpredictable, it was decided at the start of the year to continue with our successful programme of 'Zoom' talks until the year end. This helped to keep our Members in touch with each other.

INDOOR 'ZOOM' MEETINGS

- 5 January The Condor's Feather – presented by Mike and Paula Webster
- 16 February Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles in Britain – presented by Ben Driver
- 10 March Behind the Curtain – presented by Tim Sexton
- 9 April AGM followed by Members' short talks: REGUA, Atlantic Rainforest, Brazil presented by Joy Braker and 'What, Why, How' Recording for the Loughborough Naturalists' Club presented by Margaret McLoughlin
- 21 September Update on the latest recording Project of the Loughborough Naturalists' Club by Margaret McLoughlin and Hazel Graves
- 26 October White-tailed Eagle Reintroduction Project presented by Dr. Tim Mackrill
- 16 November The North Coast – A Botanical Odyssey presented by Dr. Ian Evans
- 21 December Members' Evening with short talks: National Chambal Sanctuary, India presented by Joy Braker and Birding the Leicester Round presented by Sue Graham

OUTDOOR MEETINGS

Wednesday Morning Walks took place throughout the year albeit with limited numbers.

- 5 January Calke Park – Led by Steve Woodward
- 2 February Albert Village Lake – Led by Hazel Graves
- 2 March Beacon Hill Country Park – Led by Jim and Sue Graham
- 6 April Ashby Canal – Led by Steve Woodward
- 4 May Charnwood Lodge – Led by Margaret Mcloughlin
- 1 June Ratby Burroughs – Led by Jim and Sue Graham
- 6 July Holly Hayes Wood and Coalville Meadow – Led by Peter Proudlove
- 3 August Bagworth Heath – Led by Hazel Graves
- 7 September New Lount Nature Reserve – Led by Margaret McLoughlin
- 5 October Swithland Wood – Led by Jim and Sue Graham
- 2 November Watermead Country Park, Birstall – Led by Jim and Sue Graham
- 7 December Abbey Park – Led by Hazel Graves