

**Birmingham
Natural History
Society**

Founded 1858

Registered Charity No 500819

President: Ms Kat Clifford

Internet address: <http://bnhsoc.org.uk>

NEWSLETTER No 110 – January 2017

Lecture Programme – 2017: a reminder

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak, starting at 7.30 pm

- 20 January 2017 **Dr Chris Young** – Southern India: habitats and species of Tamil Nadu
Chris is a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader for the degree in Animal Behaviour and Wildlife Conservation at the University of Wolverhampton, and has led a number of field trips to India
- 17 February 2017 **Professor Robin May** – The human zoo: a tour of our unseen microbial friends and foes
Robin is Lister Fellow and Professor of Infectious Disease in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Birmingham.
- 17 March 2017 **Jon Clatworthy** – The Lapworth Museum of Geology
Jon is Director of the Museum at the University of Birmingham, which has one of the UK's most outstanding geological collections, with a recently completed £2.7m redevelopment providing state-of-the-art galleries and a range of innovative and interactive exhibits
- 21 April 2017 **AGM and Presidential lecture: Kat Clifford** - Lemurs

BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY BOTANICAL SOCIETY

The 2016 Newsletter provides an array of information on the Society's recording work on the flora of Sutton Park, with reports also on trips to Wren's Nest/Mons Hill and Fens Pools.

Closer to BNHS's former home, a walk round Winterbourne Gardens last March found three small examples of ladder-brake fern *Pteris vittata*, an identification subsequently confirmed by the Natural History Museum. Plants were growing on the outside wall of the heated orchid house.

This is only the fourth confirmed extant site in Britain, and a new record for VC 38 Warwickshire.

For further information on this Society contact Sara Carvalho or Andy Slater at enquiries@ecorecord.org.uk.

To contact the Hon Secretary or to provide copy for the next Newsletter:

Dr Peter Jarvis
23 Crosbie Road
Harborne
Birmingham B17 9BG

0121 427 1010 peterjarvis668@gmail.com

SAVE paper, printing and postage costs: could members let me know if they would be happy to receive the Newsletter by email. **Many thanks to the increasing number of members who have already done this.**

Preservation Matters in the History of Herbal Medicine Birmingham Conference 2017

Wednesday 7th June 2017



Seminar programme and registration form available from christina.stapley@tiscali.co.uk

10.15 Registration

10.30 Welcome and introduction

10.45 **Morning session: Researching traditions**

Early medieval herbal formulations: Are we missing something? Dr Frances Watkins, Herbal History Research Network

Traditional remedies and modern science: A Russian-German project from the 1880s. Professor Vivian Nutton, I. M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University

12.15 **Lunch**, included at the Botanical Gardens (and an opportunity to view student poster presentations)

13.30 **Afternoon session: Preserving traditions**

The medico-botanical world of a 1598 Italian manuscript: Traditional knowledge in the past and present. Dr Raffaella Bruzzone, University of Nottingham

Preservation matters: Exploring historical recipes in a practical sense. Christina Stapley, Weald and Downland Open Air Museum

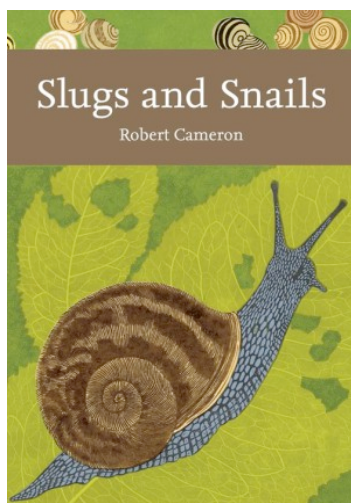
What books might herbalists have used in mid-Victorian Britain? Alison Denham, Herbal History Research Network

15.45 Tea

16.00-16.30 **Plenary session and close**

NEW NATURALISTS: LATEST VOLUME IN THE LIBRARY

133: Robert Cameron: *Slugs and Snails*



This book is about the slugs and snails that live on land. These are in many ways strange creatures: snails carry a huge weight of shell; both snails and slugs move slowly relative to their potential enemies; and most are not well camouflaged. Their moist bodies are at the mercy of dry weather and their movement is wasteful of energy and water. Despite all this, they are found from the tundra through to deserts, and on all continents apart from Antarctica. They have reached the most remote oceanic islands and undergone tremendous evolutionary developments.

In terms of species, they outnumber all land vertebrates. The damage that they cause in our gardens and to agricultural crops can be considerable and their tenacity makes them difficult to control.

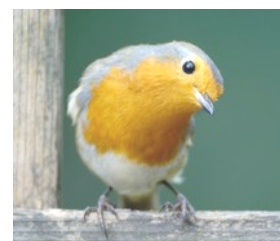
Robert Cameron, formerly of the Department of Extramural Studies at the University of Birmingham, mainly deals with the natural history of slugs and snails in the British Isles' but he also ventures across the world to explore the wide range of structures and ways of life of slugs and snails, particularly their sometimes bizarre mating habits,

Snails can be and have been used to explore important ideas in evolutionary biology, in biogeography and in ecology, and the author draws out these explorations, looking at the role of evolution in determining how our understanding of snails has developed over the years.

RSPB BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH

28-30 January

- Pick a time of day that suits you (though you're more likely to see birds in the morning)
- Watch the birds in your garden for one hour (a mug of tea or coffee might be helpful)
- Record the highest number of each bird species you see at any one time
- Even if there are no birds, this is still useful information
- Submit your results online* or on a paper form



When the RSPB compares data from hundreds of thousands of people all across the UK, and looks at results from the previous Big Garden Birdwatches (going all the way back to 1979), it provides a valuable health check of our garden birds.

Over the years, it has revealed worrying trends, including around a 70% drop in song thrushes in gardens, and a 58% drop in house sparrows.

While birds are the focus of the Birdwatch, the RSPB is also asking us to tell them which other wildlife uses our gardens to identify how much other animals depend on this habitat, e.g. foxes, badgers and slow worms.

*See: <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>

More information at: <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#inbox/15959884ed2a9dad>

BTO GARDEN BIRDWATCH

This is a more on-going opportunity for collecting data on birds and other wildlife in the garden compared to the RSPB's three-day effort. The scheme is designed to help the British Trust for Ornithology promote effective conservation action by increasing our understanding of how wild birds use different resources **at different times of year** and of how their numbers are changing.

Participants define a recording area, typically their whole garden but in larger gardens this may just be that part of the garden that can be easily watched. They then record the birds and other wildlife using this area in a systematic way. Since a key aim of Garden BirdWatch is to get a relative measure of change in garden use, **participants are asked to spend a similar amount of time recording each week**, e.g. some watch their garden for an hour on a Sunday morning, while others spend half an hour each day throughout the week.

Further information is at: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/about>

Blue tits missing from gardens

December 2016: BTO Press release

Latest figures from BTO surveys show that blue tit numbers are down, probably due to a wet summer. During the winter months a lack of food in the wider countryside encourages both adult and juvenile blue tits into gardens to make use of feeders. However, this November BTO Garden BirdWatchers reported the lowest numbers of blue tits thought to be due to a lack of young birds this year.



The wet weather across the breeding season, but particularly in June, would have made it difficult for the adults to feed themselves and their chicks. Normally we would expect to see large numbers of newly-fledged young come into gardens looking for food, but in 2016 results indicate that fewer young birds survived than usual, findings supported by preliminary results from the BTO Nest Record Scheme (NRS) and Constant Effort Sites Scheme (CES) which found that blue tits had their worst breeding season on record.