

**Birmingham
Natural History
Society**

Founded 1858

Registered Charity No 500819

President: Ms Kat Clifford

Internet address: bnhsoc.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No 112 – September 2017

Lecture Programme 2017-2018

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak, starting at 7.30 pm

- 20 October 2017 **Dr Peter Coxhead** – ‘Darwin and the Galapagos’.
- A sequel to last year’s well-received talk by Peter on these East Pacific islands.
- 17 November 2017 **Prof Peter Taylor** – The flora of the South Atlantic.
- Members will no doubt recall that Peter, who has been a member of BNHS since 1957, gave a talk on the botanist Mary Richards back in 2014.
- 19 January 2018 **Dr Peter Jarvis** – What’s in a name?
- A look at the stories behind some of the more unusual English and Latin names of plants, animals and fungi.
- 16 February 2018 **Paul Wilkinson** – A natural history of the Midlands canals.
- Paul is Senior Ecologist with South Wales & Severn and West Midlands Waterways, Canal & River Trust. He will provide ‘a general overview of the natural history of the Midlands canals, why we have certain species on the reservoirs and canals, what we have lost and what we are gaining. The canals provide both a unique green corridor for species and a snapshot of how people have been and are using their local spaces.’
- 16 March 2018 **Rosemary Winnall** – Nature in focus.
- Rosemary, for many years Education Officer at the Wyre Forest Discovery Centre, is a founder member of the Wyre Forest Study Group, a committee member of Worcestershire Recorders, and a keen wildlife photographer. She organised and was one of the editors of *The Nature of Wyre* (Pisces Publications, 2015). In 2015 she was awarded an MBE for services to the natural environment for her work volunteering to champion the Wyre Forest.
- 20 April 2016 **AGM and Presidential lecture**

Must try harder?

Membership remains more or less stable but is much lower than Council would like, and certainly doesn't reflect the population size of Birmingham and its surroundings. And while attendance at meetings seemed to pick up a little bit during the 2016-2017 lecture season, again it wasn't as high as we would like.

This concern, to be fair, is not a new one, even when membership and attendance numbers were higher and the range of activities greater. Thus, in his editorial comments in the 1976 issue of the *Proceedings*, M.C. Clark wrote:

On a rather sombre note, we have to comment on the further falling-off of interest in the Society's activities, judging by the very poor attendances at many meetings. We seem to be in a vicious circle. Efforts are made to provide meetings intended to get more of the members together and when these prove unsuccessful, the organisers are discouraged so that it becomes more and more difficult to find interesting speakers for indoor meetings and leaders for outdoor events. It is difficult to see how we can get out of this situation unless the ordinary members, Dot up to now much involved in the Society's affairs will come forward with specific suggestions of the sort of activities they would like to see in the Society and with offers of help and support in such activities.

And later on in the issue, reports on field trips (yes, the Society could run such things forty years ago ...)

SATURDAY, 17TH MAY - HARBURY. A further effort to attract a good attendance of members to an outdoor excursion by arranging a general meeting in an interesting area was again a total failure as far as, this object was concerned. **The total attendance was six.**

SATURDAY, 30TH AUGUST - RANDAN WOOD. A further item in the programme designed to attract new and non-specialist members again proved a failure from this point of view. **Only four members and the leader, Mr F. Fincher, turned up.**

Botanical Section

SUNDAY, 15TH JUNE - CLOWES WOOD. The only flowering plant excursion arranged for this year by the Section actually **turned into an informal entomological expedition, due to lack of support by botanists.**

And we used to have social evenings!

What a wonderfully eclectic mix of interests our members had fifty years ago. I suspect we still have this breadth.

From the *Proceedings*, vol 20, 1963: THE SOCIAL EVENING AND EXHIBITION held on 9th October 1962

The first event of this type in recent years, held a year ago, proved very successful. It brought together members of diverse interests who rarely meet, owing to the division of the Society into more or less self-contained sections. It was, therefore, repeated this year, and should become an annual occasion. A wide variety of different interests was again represented, and members who normally take part only in the activities of one of the sections were able to see what others were doing. Although the exhibition was an informal one, it seems worthwhile to record a few details, as a reflection of the interests and activities of members at the present time. A note of the exhibitors and brief particulars of their exhibits follows:

MR L. W. PINKESS showed 32 colour slides in home-processed Ferraniacolor of British orchids, in an illuminated display cabinet.

MR H. R. MUNRO, who is an expert on trees, and was formerly head forester at the Lickey Hills, showed a number of herbarium sheets of foliage of native and introduced trees, to illustrate autumn colour. He also had some specimens of mosses and lichens, dried and beautifully mounted in special display boxes, and, lastly, a number of photographs on two subjects, (1) good and bad tree pruning, and (2) Sirex woodwasps and their parasites.

MR W. PEARSE CHOPE exhibited living amoebae under microscopes, using a special technique involving the suspension of a drop of water on a slide in liquid paraffin, which enables the specimens to be kept alive for weeks. He also showed some large living specimens of freshwater mussel.

MR F. A. NOBLE showed specimens of Lepidoptera, and also of mosses, collected on a Scottish holiday in the Aviemore area, and the Findhorn Valley. He also exhibited six bred specimens of *Nonagria typhae* (bulrush wainscot moth) from Cannock Chase, and three from Edgbaston Nature Reserve. The Birmingham specimens were duller and darker than the Cannock specimens, the probable result of industrial melanism.

MR CARTWRIGHT TIMMS showed a number of Diptera from Cannon Hill Park, mostly common species, but including *Rhagio lineola*, *Thereva nobilitata* and *Conops flavipes*, which are not frequent Midland insects.

MR L. J. EVANS showed a collection of Spanish Lepidoptera, with English specimens for comparison wherever possible.

MR D. J. R. HAIGH had living specimens of common and natterjack toads, common lizard, slow-worm and crested newt. Amusement was caused by the sight of the toads feeding on flies. His other exhibit was of herbarium sheets of orchids, mainly from Wales and the Midlands.

PROF. J. G. HAWKES and Mr R. C. READETT, the official recorders for the new Flora of Warwickshire, showed a number of herbarium sheets of specimens collected by workers in the present survey, illustrating 'new finds and old records.' These included about 10 new county records, and about the same number of species which had been thought probably extinct, but which have been re-found in the present survey. Other rare species shown have persisted in localities known to early botanists for a century or more.

PROF. J. G. HAWKES also showed some fine photographs of Mexican scenery and plants including some potato species.

MR M. C. CLARK showed living material of 45 species of mosses and liverworts from Wyre Forest. He also showed specimens of *Lycopodium clavatum* (stag's horn moss), *Thelypteris dryopteris* (oak fern) and *Juncus tenuis*, recently discovered by him in Wyre Forest.

MR E. A. B. STANTON showed a complete collection of Lepidoptera collected during 1962 in Arley Wood, Warwickshire, as part of the survey of the Lepidoptera of the Midland Plateau on which the Entomological Section is engaged.

MR H. H. FOWKES showed, by means of a projector, colour slides taken by himself and Prof. Hawkes during the 1961 expedition to the Pyrenees, attended by several members of the Botanical Section of the Society.

The number of members and visitors attending the Social Evening and Exhibition was estimated at 70.

Climate change impacts on UK biodiversity: declining moths and increasing aphids

From BTO Science News (September 2017)

Climate change is a much discussed topic. There has been significant warming in the UK since the 1960s, with land temperature from 2005-2014 0.9°C higher than the 1961-1990 mean, and detectable shifts in rainfall patterns.

In a collaborative project, BTO analysed data on population trends from the Rothamsted Insect Survey (aphids and moths), the National Bat Monitoring Programme, the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, and the Breeding Bird Survey (birds and mammals).

Results suggest that climate change may have had a significant impact on the long-term trend of 79 species since the 1970s. Trends of eight rapidly declining species matched the negative impacts of climate change expected from modelling, including two birds (lesser redpoll and common snipe) and six moths (mottled umber, little emerald, northern winter moth, twin-spot carpet, broom moth and minor shoulder-knot). Positive population trends of four species were consistent with the modelled increases in abundance expected from climate change (greylag goose, Canada goose, lesser-spotted pinion and Reeves muntjac).

Across species, moth populations declined by an average of 1.4% per year, half of which was consistent with the expected impact of climate change. Conversely, winged aphid abundance increased annually by 0.7%, of which over 60% may have been caused by climate change.

Although it is difficult to definitively attribute long-term trends to climate change, this study suggests that at least some long-term trends in terrestrial biodiversity may have been caused by climate change. Although overall changes in bird, mammal and butterfly populations were not strongly related to climate change, matching the results of previous work on farmland birds, and suggesting that other drivers of change have probably been more important for these groups, the results strongly suggest that climate change may have significantly contributed to the decline of moths, particularly in southern Britain, and to increases in winged aphids.



Lesser-spotted pinion © David G. Green 2009

Local in woodland and hedgerows throughout much of southern England and Wales. Dutch elm disease, however, played havoc with the population of this elm-feeding species.

Water Bent *Polypogon viridis*

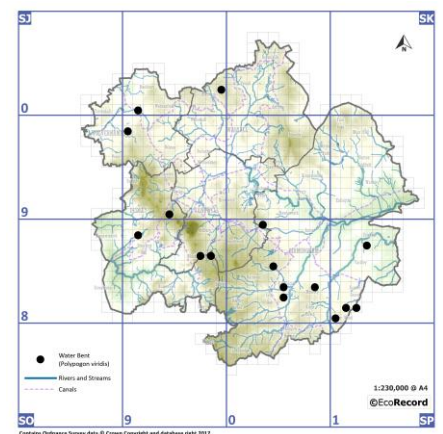
Mike Poulton notes, via the Birmingham & Black Country Botanical Society, two new records of water bent growing on pavement at the base of garden walls in Blackheath (Nimmings Road and Church Street).

In the *Flora of Birmingham & the Black Country* (ed. Trueman, Poulton & Reade), this grass is described as 'an annual or short-lived perennial, with growing number of records from roadsides in urban areas, where it seems to be spreading steadily.' But, as Mike comments, it is often overlooked.

This is a native of southern Europe, cultivated in Britain by 1800 and first noted in the wild in Cardiff in 1896.



Water bent in an Antwerp street. © E. Molenaar 2010.



Revised distribution map © EcoRecord

COMPUTER-MAPPED FLORA RECORDS SAVED

As reported in the Warwickshire Flora Group Newsletter No 12, November 2016, acknowledgement and thanks that:

Birmingham Natural History Society has given a grant of £6,000 to the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre to help digitise twelve large boxes of field data from *A Computer-mapped Flora of Warwickshire* by D. A. Cadbury, J. G. Hawkes and R. C. Readett published in 1971.

This big green book was the first flora in the world to use a computer programme for mapping. In the Flora each map just shows a plant's presence or absence in each tetrad, whilst the boxes of field notes give much more information, including a date, which site was visited, the surveyor, and details of any critical species. There is also a large collection of letters from referees and references to plant material in the Warwick Herbarium.

The Biological Records Centre would like to add all of this extra information to their Recorder database and also hopefully make it available to the public.

Agni-Louiza Arampoglou at the Biological Records Centre in Warwick is coordinating this project and is looking for volunteers to help input data. If you think you could offer her some of your time contact her on agni-louizaarampoglou@warwickshire.gov.uk

Northern Coleopterists' Meeting 2017

Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL
Saturday 23rd September 2017

- 10.00-10.20 Arrival
- 10.20-10.30 'Welcome' - Tom Hubball & Dmitri Logunov
- 10.30-11.10 'The Beetles of Arran'- Alex Ramsay
- 11.10-11.40 'Back from the Brink'- TBC - Buglife
- 11.40-11.55 'Longhorn Recording Scheme Update & Cleroidea and Lymexyloidea Recording Scheme'- Wil Heeney
- 11.55-12.35 'The Northern Origins of David Sharp, the Great British Coleopterist' – Garth Foster
- 12.35-13.15 'SEM studies of form and function in Notoxus, Orthocerus, Bledius, Aphodius and carabids '- Dick Loxton
- 13.15-14.15 Lunch - Either bring sandwiches or visit the 'Cafe at the Museum'
<http://www.thecafeatthemuseum.co.uk/food>.
- 14.15-16.30 Informal discussion and identification session in the Entomology Department.

(All times subject to alteration)

Tom Hubball
Tel: 01535 678334 after 6.30pm
Email: ukbeetles@blueyonder.co.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.