

**Birmingham  
Natural History  
Society**

Founded 1858

Registered Charity No 500819

President: Ms Kat Clifford

Internet address: [bnhsoc.org.uk](http://bnhsoc.org.uk)

**NEWSLETTER No 117 – September 2019**

**Lecture Programme 2019-2020**

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak, starting at 7.30 pm

18 October 2019

**Morgan Hughes** – Habitats, wildlife and management in Florida

Morgan is an ecologist specialising in mammals, and a PhD researcher at the University of Wolverhampton studying bats in the urban fringe. She is also the county bat recorder for Birmingham and the Black Country. Her talk will look at some of the key habitats in Florida (Oak Hammock, Saw Palmetto Scrub and Mangroves), then comment on reptiles, birds and mammals.

15 November 2019

**Peter Shirley** – What should live where? An adventure in time and space

Peter was a founder member of what was then the Urban Wildlife Group in 1980, became the first Director of the Urban Wildlife Trust/Birmingham and the Black Country WT, and has held a number of positions with the Wildlife Trusts at regional and national levels. He has recently reprised his role as Chair of BBCWT's. Peter also has a regular column writing on wildlife and conservation for the Birmingham Post.

17 January 2020

**Jack Perks** – Shetland – Britain's northern edge

Jack is a professional freelance photographer, having worked on BBC nature shows such as Springwatch, Countryfile, The One Show and The Great British Year. He has a number of awards for his wildlife photography, including Highly Commended in the 2016 British Wildlife Photography Awards for his video 'Lady of the stream – Grayling spawning', and runner-up in the British Waters Wide Angle category in the 2019 Underwater Photographer of the Year Awards (see right). In 2013 he crowd-funded a project to film every freshwater fish in the UK, and in 2016 set up a national campaign to identify a 'national fish', which was won by the brown trout.



British Waters Wide Angle category runner-up -  
Grass snake swimming along a garden pond  
(© Jack Perks 2019)

21 February 2020

**Paul Wilkinson** – The natural history of the Midlands canals – Part 2

Paul is Senior Ecologist with the South Wales & Severn and West Midlands Waterways (Canal & River Trust), based in Birmingham. The first part of this talk, given in February 2018, was so well received we had to have him back again for the second half as soon as his busy schedule allowed!

20 March 2020

**Prof Peter Tyrer** – The John Heslop-Harrison fraud – the really Rum affair

Peter, who has been a member of BNHS since 1957, gave a talk on the botanist Mary Richards back in 2014, and in 2017 one on the flora of the South Atlantic. On this occasion he will be talking about John Harrison (1881–1967), Professor of Botany at Newcastle University, now probably best remembered for a serious academic fraud.

17 April 2020

**AGM and Presidential lecture**

## AGM

19 April 2019

Fifteen members and one guest were present. All Officers and Members of Council proposed on the Agenda were unanimously elected, including Dr Peter Coxhead as the new Hon Treasurer and Dr Geoff Barnbrook as the new Hon Librarian. The Library had moved to the All-Services Club, 91 Church Road, Moseley (see below). The audited accounts for both 2017 and 2018 were presented and unanimously accepted. Because we are an 'unincorporated' society, our shares are held in the name(s) of our nominee trustee(s) rather than the Society, a situation which the Hon Treasurer has been battling against bureaucratic regulation and a not-always-helpful bank to change. Meanwhile, Council has been empowered to appoint at least one further nominee trustee. Any members willing to become a nominee trustee (see definition below) should inform the Hon Treasurer or Hon Secretary.

## UNINCORPORATED SOCIETIES AND NOMINEE TRUSTEES

An **unincorporated society** such as BNHS is treated as being a group of individuals with a common interest, rather than registered as an organisation that has a separate existence. A **nominee trust** is an arrangement whereby one or more persons or organisation appoints a trustee or trustees to be listed on legal title, or other documents, on their behalf. The arrangement is simple and passive. The trustees do nothing except what they are directed to do by the beneficiaries.

## LIBRARY

All-Services Club, 91 Church Road, Moseley

With the Selly Oak Society of Friends no longer able to house the Society's Library, the books and book cases have now been moved to a designated room at the above premises. A list of books kept at Moseley, and available for borrowing, will be made available to members separately. Members wishing to borrow books or use the Library should contact the Hon Librarian, Dr Geoff Barnbrook, on 0787 130 2000 or at [geoff.barnbrook@gmail.com](mailto:geoff.barnbrook@gmail.com). (Geoff lives just a few minutes away.) With sufficient warning, Geoff is willing to bring books along to meetings.

A number of older books are also, we hope, still catalogued by and available at Birmingham Central Library – certainly they were in the old, now demolished library.

## PRESIDENTIAL TALK

### Extinct megafauna of the late Pleistocene and Holocene

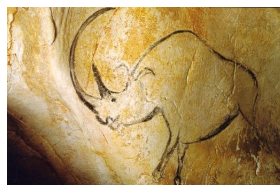
Kat Clifford

Megafauna does not mean big in an absolute sense but describes any animal that is especially large for its kind. A goliath beetle, for example, is enormous for a beetle, and therefore can be described as megafauna even though it can fit in your hand.

Across Europe our prehistoric ancestors left a record of the animals they shared their world with, for example



Mammoth



Rhino

Kat then illustrated and commented on a range of other extinct megafauna, including Irish elk, aurochs and sabre-toothed cat, the Australian giant wombat, New Zealand moa, and from the Americas giant ground sloth, Colombian mammoth, mastodon and (the size and indeed shape of a VW Beetle) the giant armadillo.

Some Pleistocene and Holocene extinctions may in part have been a consequence of climate change, but most – perhaps all – have been caused by overhunting.



Cave bear



Cave lion



The lost megafauna

Near misses from extinction include the North American bison. And of course there is a need to be concerned about what might be the next species to go -African elephant, black rhino, snow leopard, tiger?

## Northern Coleopterists' Meeting 2019

Liverpool World Museum, William Brown Street, L3 8EN  
Saturday 28th September 2019

- 10:00-10:20 Arrival
- 10:20-10:30 Welcome - Don Stenhouse & Tony Hunter
- 10:30-11:00 The E.C. Rye collection at Bolton Museum- Don Stenhouse
- 11:00-11:20 Some interesting beetle records using simple extractor techniques – Clive Washington
- 11:20-11:40 The Coleoptera archives at Liverpool World Museum - Steve Judd
- 11:40 -12:10 The Hunt for *Sigorus porcus* in North West England - Darren Mann
- 12:10 - 12:30 Some aspects of the biology of *Aegialia arenaria* - Dick Loxton
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch - Either bring your own or visit the World Museum's Café ([www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/visit/cafe.aspx](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/visit/cafe.aspx))
- 13:30-16:30 Informal discussion and identification session in the Entomology Department.

You need to sign in at the front desk from 10am and may have to show photo identification.  
For transport and parking, see the link below or the emailed pdf.

Museum Information desk: 0151 478 4393

Getting to World Museum - <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/visit/getting-here.aspx>

Don Stenhouse  
Bolton Museum  
Tel: 01204 338765 (work)  
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## The Birmingham and Black Country Botanical Society

There will be a fungus walk on **Sunday 13th October** at **Sutton Park** led by Lukas Large, beginning at 11am, starting at the car park to the north of the Lower Arena Field. The vehicle entrance is via Streetly Gate and you follow the track for about a kilometre before you reach the car park on the left (the car park grid reference is (SP 0942 9788).

## UK Big Butterfly Count 2019

In Butterfly Conservation's 2019 survey a record 113,500 people took part, noting nearly 1.6m butterflies during the three-week recording period from the end of July. Top ten numbers were:

1. Painted lady (420,841) - their first big influx on British shores in a decade
2. Peacock (207,814)
3. Small white (179,715)

4. Gatekeeper (161,987)
5. Large white (138,671)
6. Meadow brown (110,858)
7. Red admiral (91,146)
8. Small tortoiseshell (70,704) - numbers have fallen by 78% since the 1970s. Last summer was the worst for the species since the count began but this year it was up by 167%, with its highest number for five years.
9. Speckled wood (33,015)
10. Green-veined white (32,965)

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

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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.**