

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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*Chorley and District Natural History Society is a
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COMMITTEE IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION

The Editorial for last summer's Newsletter took the form of an impassioned plea by our secretary Phil Kirk for new committee members. Unfortunately, we didn't attract any volunteers so the situation has now become worse, following the resignation of another committee member.



The committee for the forthcoming season now stands at seven members, which is about half the number which the constitution envisages.

We, therefore, need to repeat last year's appeal for new blood onto the committee. Approximately 10 meetings per year are held, which are as much a social occasion as a formal gathering. Initially, all we would be looking for from new members would be fresh ideas relating to indoor meetings and field trips to prevent the existing committee becoming stale and set in its ways!

Contact Phil directly (01257 266783 or secretary@chorleynats.org.uk) or speak to any committee member if you feel you can help out.

One other thing while we're on Society business. Could I request that all members, who pay by Standing Order, make sure they have adjusted it to the new subscription rate. It will make the Treasurer's job a lot easier if she doesn't have to chase members for any shortfall in their subscription.

Neil Southworth

FLORA REPORT

I will start this quarter's report by quoting the following:-

"The beautiful blue haze and sweet scent of the UK's native bluebells make it one of the most spectacular annual floral displays in Europe. But is it late this year? Fred Rumsey, a botanist from the Natural History Museum, London, believes so: "Our initial impression being that flowering is between four and five weeks behind what it was last year." He told BBC Nature that flowering times of both native and non-native bluebell species can be useful in demonstrating and quantifying the effects of climate change. "The more people that we can persuade to help us capture when flowering occurs in their part of the British Isles each and every year the more robust and scientifically useful our data-set will be," Mr Rumsey added.



I have certainly found this to be the case here in Chorley as well. It seemed that everything was very late and then suddenly, when the sunshine came everything rushed to catch up. I saw some celandine out at the same time as an orchid which in my experience is quite unusual. . Returning to bluebells, I found that although late and probably a little more short-lived this year, the display was more spectacular than ever. We did have some sightings not recorded before though I suspect they were not reported rather than new to our area. Hedgerow cranesbill is common in the South Lancs area but no-one had submitted a record prior to this year. When one of our members did say they had seen some, I was unable to find any previous records. This is a reminder that if any plant is not recorded, then in twenty years when our records are checked they will think it has not existed in Chorley. Please continue to send in records either by the Forum or using Royal Mail.

David Beattie

INSECT REPORT

The emergence dates of our butterfly species is dependent on how they spend the winter – as an egg, a larva, a pupa or as an adult.

After a long cold winter, the local butterfly species which overwinter as adults all emerged later than usual. Most years, butterflies are around in ones and twos during March and sometimes on sunny days in February. This year a Small Tortoiseshell at Great Knowley on 6th April, a Peacock in Adlington on April 15th, a Comma in Chorley on the same day, and Brimstone at Birkacre on 20th April were the early awakeners.



Peacock overwinters as an adult

Species which overwinter as pupae emerge next and these include the Whites, which as always were well recorded. The Orange Tip was seen from 20th April onwards with reasonable numbers at Hic Bibi and near Ransnap Brook in Euxton. Holly Blue overwinters as a pupa but we had only one record this spring on 8th May at Euxton. The Speckled Wood, which was seen first at Eccleston on 30th April, can spend winter either as a larva or a pupa. I suspect in this case it must have been a pupa.

Species which overwinter as larvae are later because obviously they need to complete feeding and pupate. These include the Small Copper – seen at Hic Bibi on 2nd June, Common Blue – seen at Chisnall on 6th June and the Small and Large Skippers. In fact we had no records of Small Skippers before the end of June, but the Large Skipper was seen at the Burgh Hall Pond on June 21st.

Most Hairstreak species overwinter as eggs and so have to hatch, feed and pupate before adults fly. However, the Green Hairstreak overwinters as a larva. This is why it is seen in May (25th this year at Healey Nab) whereas we hope for the others in July and August.

All the “Browns” overwinter as larvae and the only local species to appear before the end of June was the Small Heath which was a welcome record on 17th June on the Anglezarke Moors.

Lastly there are the migrants. Red Admiral can overwinter locally as an adult – for example one was found hibernating in January 2011 (Euxton). However, most of our Red Admirals are migrants and tend to appear in June. This year we had just one record on 21st June at Healey Nab. Other migrants such as Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow had not arrived in time for this report!

Away from my regular moth recording contributors, it was nice to hear of Lime Hawk Moth found in a Coppull Garden on 3rd May. They and the other Hawk Moths are spectacular things and so large that you would expect them to be easy enough to find when they are resting during daylight. Not so, but if you borrow one of the Society’s traps you would be likely to get them in your trap in May and June.



Lime Hawk Moth seen at Coppull

The pond at Burgh Hall, the dragonfly pond at Cuerden, and Hic Bibi are excellent spots for dragonflies. In addition to the commoner damselfly species, Four Spotted and Broad Bodied Chasers were recorded there in June. Well worth a visit on a sunny day.

Phil Kirk

BIRD REPORT

April

Winter visitors were still very much in evidence during the first week of the month at least. Waxwings still graced the town with 24 in Water Street and 10 at the cemetery on the 1st. Quite large flocks of Fieldfare were noted in the first week including 100+ on Croston Moss on the 7th, 10 at Brindle on the 7th and 20 at Eccleston on the 12th. Last sighting was one at the E-shaped pond on the 21st. Redwings too were seen in good numbers with flocks of 20 on Croston Moss (1st), 40 at Brindle (7th) 30 at Eccleston (12th) and 20 at Anglezarke (13th). Fewer Brambling were seen but these included 4 on Croston Moss (6th) and singles at Great Knowley (10th) and Clayton Green (12th). The wintering flock of Golden Plover on Croston Moss peaked at 150 on the 10th and had reduced to 35 by the 21st. A pair of Goldeneye was still on High Bullough Reservoir on the 13th.

Summer visitor first arrival dates, including March and May arrivals for completeness, were as follows:-

Whimbrel	17 th April	(17 th April)	<i>Eccleston</i>
Common Sandpiper	20 th April	(6 th April)	<i>Anglezarke Res</i>
Little Ringed Plover	30 th March	(6 th April)	<i>Belmont</i>
Common Tern	28 th April	(19 th April)	<i>Yarrow Valley Park</i>
Cuckoo	27 th April	(21 st April)	<i>Brinscall</i>
Swift	23 rd April	(28 th April)	<i>Croston</i>
Swallow	8 th April	(6 th April)	<i>Croston</i>
House Martin	13 th April	(13 th April)	<i>Croston</i>
Sand Martin	31 st March	(24 th March)	<i>Roddlesworth</i>
Wheatear	30 th March	(24 th March)	<i>Lead Mines / Belmont</i>
Whinchat	23 rd April	(12 th May)	<i>Croston / Eccleston</i>
Ring Ouzel	13 th April	(28 th March)	<i>White Coppice</i>
Yellow Wagtail	21 st April	No record	<i>Croston Sewage Works</i>
Chiffchaff	23 rd March	(16 th March)	<i>Croston / Eccleston</i>
Willow Warbler	12 th April	(31 st March)	<i>Arley / Anglezarke</i>
Garden Warbler	23 rd April	(24 th April)	<i>Yarrow Valley Park</i>
Blackcap	31 st March	(1 st April)	<i>Chorley</i>
Wood Warbler	30 th April	(5 th May)	<i>Euxton</i>
Sedge Warbler	21 st April	(22 nd April)	<i>E-shaped Pond</i>
Reed Warbler	21 st April	(22 nd April)	<i>Croston Reed Bed</i>
Grasshopper Warbler	21 st April	(22 nd April)	<i>E-shaped Pond</i>
Whitethroat	21 st April	(22 nd April)	<i>Croston Moss</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	28 th April	(28 th April)	<i>Eccleston</i>
Tree Pipit	27 th April	(17 th April)	<i>White Coppice</i>
Redstart	20 th April	(21 st April)	<i>Anglezarke</i>
Pied Flycatcher	21 st April	(24 th April)	<i>Anglezarke</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	17 th May	(12 th May)	<i>Anglezarke</i>

Last year's first arrival dates are shown in brackets for comparison.

Summer migrants on passage included a couple of Osprey – one over Whittle on the 4th and one over Euxton on the 10th. A wandering Red Kite was over Belmont on the 7th. The annual passage of Whimbrel started on the 17th with 6 at Eccleston and a similar number off Runshaw lane, Euxton, then 20 near Croston (28th), a single at Coppull the same day, 50 at Heskin and 2 on Croston Moss (both 30th). Ring Ouzel passage at White Coppice was noted between 13th and 27th with at least 3 birds present on 21st. Heavy Wheatear passage was noted on Croston Moss on the 21st with well over 50 birds distributed around the fields. Yellow Wagtails were noted feeding in fields adjacent to Croston sewage works from 21st when two were present until the 28th with the maximum count being 5 on the 25th. Keeping them company were good numbers of White Wagtail, including 13 on the 21st. Little Ringed Plover were noted at Eyes Lane (3rd), Anglezarke Reservoir (10th) and 2 at Charnock Richard (16th). Moving inland from the coast in numbers were Shelduck including 20 at Bretherton Eyes (2nd) and 48 at Croston (8th).



Yellow Wagtail seen at Croston Sewage Works

Already breeding were a pair of Mallard with 12 chicks at Eccleston on the 7th and a pair of Dipper in Yarrow Valley Park with at least one chick by the 24th. One other noteworthy record concerns Mandarin Duck, sightings of which included 2 pairs at Arley nature reserve (12th), a single drake in Astley Park from the 15th and a pair on the Yarrow at Eccleston (19th).

May

The pair of Mute Swans at Lower Healey had produced 6 young by the 24th and the pair in Astley Park had 4 by the 29th. A female Goosander on the Yarrow at Eccleston had 9 young on the 15th. The pair of Mandarin was again noted there on the 15th, while the drake on Astley Park Lake remained until the 2nd.



Whimbrel seen at Croston

Whimbrel passage continued with 30 at Croston and 40 at Heskin on the 1st, 35 at Withnell Fold (4th), 2 at Hic Bibi (5th), 18 at Coppull (7th) and 26 at Coppull (12th). There were two more sightings of Red Kite this month, the first near Manor House farm at Anglezarke (2nd) and the second at Euxton on the 31st. A Black Tern at Adlington Reservoir on the 17th was a good record. In addition to the resident pair at Yarrow Valley Park, a Common Tern was at Croston Twin Lakes on the 2nd. Similarly, in addition to Cuckoos noted along the Brinscall to Healey Nab axis, one was recorded at Eccleston on the 31st.

Birds still on passage included a couple of White Wagtail at Croston Sewage Works on the 2nd, and a Whinchat on Croston Moss on the 19th. Scarcer summer visitors included Tree Pipits at White Coppice and Roddlesworth (6th) and Spotted Flycatcher at Lead Mines Clough (4th), High Bullough (18th) and Waterman's Cottage (19th). It was also a good year for Wood Warbler sightings with birds at Euxton (1st), Anglezarke (2nd), Lead Mines Clough (4th) and High Bullough (6th – 19th).

June

News of breeding Mute Swans was unfortunately negative this month with all four cygnets in Astley Park perishing, and the pair in Yarrow Valley Park failing to hatch any of the clutch. The pair of Great Crested Grebes at Yarrow Valley Park did, however, manage to produce one young. At Heapey Lodges, however, although at least three adults were present, there was no evidence of breeding. At Withnell lodges, there were no grebes present for the first time for many years. On a brighter note the female Goosander was again seen with 8 young on the Yarrow at Eccleston (5th).

The pair of Common Terns at Yarrow Valley Park produced 2 young by the 19th, but both had perished by the end of the month. Common Terns were also seen along the canal at Botany (11th) and at Withnell Fold (30th). Mediterranean Gulls seen away from Belmont included birds at Nickleton Brow (3rd) and in Astley Park (30th).

First Hobby of the year was seen at Arley Nature Reserve on the 1st. A juvenile Tawny Owl was seen along Syd Brook on the 11th and the next day a family of 5 Nuthatch was noted. Still on breeding records, a Dipper with 3 young was on the Yarrow at Birkacre and was either a second pair or a second brood to that reported in April.



Cuckoo sightings came from Dean Wood (2nd), Stronstrey bank (3rd), Withnell Moor (8th), White Coppice (3 on 9th), Rivington (17th) and Heatherlea Woods (2 on 20th). A Kingfisher was on the river Darwen at Hoghton on the 24th. Scarce summer visitors included Reed Warbler on the Douglas at Croston (9th) and at Yarrow Valley Park (15th), Sedge Warbler on the Douglas (2nd) and along Syd Brook (3rd), Lesser Whitethroat at Hic Bibi ((8th), and Wood Warbler still singing at High Bullough (15th). A pair of Redstart was at Anglezarke (3rd) and 3 were at White Coppice (4th). Spotted Flycatchers were at Anglezarke (15th) and Withnell Fold (30th).

Many thanks to the following for submitting records:-

I.Ball, I&D.Barnett, D.Beattie, D.Beevers, J.Bolton, J.Bowen, J.Catt, P.Catterall, J.Cobham, B.Derbyshire, K.Dougan, D.Downing, T.Dunn, J.Edwards, S.Field, M.Fishwick, J.Frankland, K.Haydock, M.Hilton, D.Holland, R.Hoyle, C&T.Johnson, P.Kirk, P.Krischkiw, E.Langrish, A.Leach, G.Lilley, J.Love, I.Lynas, S.Martin, D.North, G.Parsons, A.Power, L.Poxon, C.Rae, J.Riley, P.Ross, P.Rowlands, J.Smith, N.Southworth, R.Spencer, C.Thistlethwaite, R.Todd, J.Waidson, N.&T.West, P.West, T.Westhead, P.Whittaker, K.Woan, I.Woosey.

Please continue to send your records to the forum or the editor.

Neil Southworth

EARWIGS

Earwigs are not a group of insects which are highly regarded for their beauty or even widely collected by either professional biologists or amateur naturalists. To gardeners they are mostly regarded as a minor pest because of their habit of nibbling at the leaves and petals of flowers such as Clematis, Dahlias, Zinnias or Hollyhocks.

In reality they are a rather interesting group of insects; partly because they are highly unusual amongst insects with several species practicing brood care, defending their eggs and their offspring up to the stage of their first instar larvae. After that the larvae change, shedding their skins and begin to differentiate into male and female earwigs. The two sexes can be distinguished as the males have arched forceps or callipers whilst the females have forceps which are nearly straight. They are also both interesting and useful as most of them are omnivores and are useful predators on a range of pests of fruit trees and other garden plants

Earwigs are distributed throughout all the continents and worldwide there are around 2,200 different species. Europe as a whole only has around 83 species whilst Britain is quite impoverished with only 4 native species and 3 recent introductions of which one may now be extinct as it has not been collected for some years. Only three species (the Common earwig, Lesne's earwig and the Lesser earwig) have expanded their geographical range as far as Ireland. P.C. Barnard (2011) in his book "The Royal Entomological Society Book of British Insects" gives a classification of earwigs as follows –

Phylum – **Arthropoda**

Subphylum – **Hexapoda**

Class - **Insecta**

Subclass - **Pterygota** (Neoptera – Polyneoptera)

Order - **Dermaptera** (The 7 UK species are divided between 4 families)

Family – **Anisolabiditae** *Euboriella annulipes* The Ring-legged earwig was first named by Lucas in 1847. It is easily recognised as both its fore and hind wings are absent so it cannot fly.. It is an introduced species in relatively recent times and has not spread far from the south coast. It is thought it was introduced carried by ships from the Mediterranean.

Family – **Forficulidae** *Forficula auricularia* The Common earwig was named by Linnaeus in 1758. It is a native of Europe, western Asia and possibly North Africa and is widespread in the UK. The Common earwig has two pairs of wings with small leathery flaps for the forewings but well-developed hind wings folded under the forewings; although it can fly it does not often do so. It is about 12-15 mm long. It is largely nocturnal though does move around in the daytime and feeds omnivorously on a wide range of plant material and some animal life. The adults hibernate during the winter and emerge in late winter to lay their eggs which the female cares for until they are they are young nymphs able to look after themselves.

Forficula lesnei Lesne's earwig was named by Finot in 1887. It is thought to be native to England but is confined to base rich soils in southern England and Wales, south of a line from the Wash to Pembroke in Wales. It is often to be found in the intertidal zone at the water's edge. It is a small earwig of about 6 to 7 mm long, rather

paler in colour than other species of earwig. It can be recognised by the fact that the hind wings do not protrude beyond the cover of the fore-wings or elytra.

Apterygidia media The Short-winged or Hop-garden earwig. was first named by Hagenbach in 1822. The geographical range of this species is from southern Sweden east as far as the Ukraine, south to the Mediterranean coast and as far west as Portugal and north to Britain but not into Ireland. Like Lesne's earwig it is confined to southern eastern England from Suffolk and Essex to Kent, and, as its name suggests, is often found in Kentish Hop-gardens. Like Lesne's earwig it has only vestigial hind wings and consequently does not fly. It can be recognised by its reddish-brown colour and yellow legs. The distribution of this species has been reduced by excessive use of pesticides and it is now rare in the hop fields. It appears to be confined to warm moist hedgerows and the edges of woodland comprising mainly Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), a tree largely confined to calcareous or clay soils.

Family – **Labiduridae** *Labidura riparia* The Striped, Giant or Tawny earwig first named by Pallas in 1773. This species is native to southern Europe and is the largest of all European species reaching a length of 25 to 30 mm. It is a rare inhabitant of sandy areas on the south coast, especially around Portsmouth and Lymington, though with climate change bringing warmer weather it may establish itself on sandy heathland further inland. It is our only carnivorous earwig preying on a wide range of small Arthropods. However it is possibly extinct as it has not been reported for some years but whether this is because of its rarity or the lack of earwig enthusiasts to collect it we do not know.

Family – **Spongiphoridae** *Labia minor* The Small or Lesser earwig was first named by Linnaeus in 1758. Its geographical range is throughout northern temperate areas though it has also been introduced to Australia and widely scattered locations such as the Galapagos Islands, Philippines and Madeira presumably with plants transported by mankind. It is a native species widespread in the Britain and flies well. It is very small, chocolate brown in colour, only about 4 to 7 mm long and can be mistaken for a beetle. It has well-developed wings and flies well. Its habitat preference is for warm, moist places such as compost heaps as it feeds on decaying plant material.

Marava arachidis The Chief or Bone-house earwig was first named by Yersin in 1860. It is an introduced species from south-east Asia and gets its name because it first became established in bone stores used for glue manufacture. It is rare in southern England and may not be a permanent resident.

In the March 2013 issue of the journal "The Plantsman" there is a note about the work of Michelle Fountain, an entomologist working at the East Malling Research Station, on the activities of earwigs as predators, especially in apple and pear orchards, where they are voracious consumers of a wide range of pests – aphids, including woolly aphids, scale insects, codling moth, psyllid bugs and pear sucker. Work in Belgium and the Netherlands has shown that where earwig populations are low, pests such as pear sucker and woolly aphids on apples become more troublesome.

All these pests can prove a serious burden for any tree fruit so it looks as though we should be more careful about killing earwigs. Gardeners should avoid where possible

the use of broad spectrum pesticides especially for earwigs during the key periods of growth and development between May and October. This would be generally beneficial for a wide range of insects which are under threat including butterflies, honey bees, bumble bees, dragonflies and other insects whether beautiful or useful.

The earwigs we are likely to see in Chorley are the Common earwig and the Small or Lesser earwig. To find any other species would indicate a considerable extension of their geographical range. For those wishing to do more to further our knowledge of earwigs and their distribution and numbers there is a Recording Scheme for the Orthopteroids of the British Isles with further information available on www.orthoptera.org.uk. This website is primarily concerned with records of all Orthoptera, an order which includes grasshoppers, crickets, and several introduced species such as locusts which are probably either escapes from life as household pets or from laboratories. There are some 27 species of native Orthoptera. However the website does also collect records of closely related groups of both native and introduced species including earwigs, cockroaches, mantids and stick insects.

Robert Yates



Forficula auricularia The Common Earwig

Photo by kind permission of Jarmo Holopainen

NORFOLK

My wife and I have recently returned from Norfolk, a place we have fallen in love with over the last few years. For anybody with an interest in wildlife, a visit to this county should be high on your list of places to visit.



We will start on the North Norfolk coast, where places like Titchwell and Cley attract thousands of wading birds, and Marsh Harriers drift over the reed beds hunting for their prey. If you are really lucky and visiting at this time of year you may be fortunate enough to witness the male and female Harriers performing a food pass. These reed beds are also home to plenty of warblers including the often heard but rarely seen Cettis Warbler, and the equally shy Bearded Tit. In the small pools you may be lucky enough to see a Water Vole. We watched one washing itself about 2 feet away from us, what a treat.

The farm we stayed on was about 15 miles from the coast and was home to Barn, Little and Tawny Owls, as well as a breeding pair of Kestrels. We also saw Muntjac deer in the area, and Hares are plentiful but didn't hang around when I pointed my camera in their direction.

We also paid a visit to one of the commons in the area, where after a bit of searching we located a stunning male Adder, the first one either of us had ever seen. It was a lovely green colour with dark zig-zags down its back. During the morning we found nine Adders, including a mating pair that we left alone as they are easily disturbed. I

did however manage a few photos of a very obliging female later on. We also found Common Lizards sunbathing on the sandy substrate.



Moving down into the Norfolk Broads we went in search of Swallowtail Butterflies. The weather was dry but dull and Swallowtails don't fly very much if the sun isn't shining. We visited Hickling Broad, and after applying insect repellent we wandered along the boardwalk. Black Tailed Skimmer dragonflies rose from the floor as we approached, and as the sun came out we watched a Norfolk Hawker come towards us and appear to check us out, flying round us before chasing another dragonfly over the reeds. As we looked around, I spotted a large butterfly land on a Flag Iris. It was a beautiful Swallowtail which fluttered right past us, then there were two, then three. We watched them for about twenty minutes before the sun disappeared and they settled in the reeds out of sight. We did manage to find a very recently emerged example, which we could study quite closely as it clung to a flower stem. Unfortunately when we returned the morning after to the same spot, all that remained were two unmarked wings of the butterfly lying on the floor, a tasty snack for something no doubt.

The weather took a turn for the worse over the next couple of days, but we did manage to see more Swallowtails when the cloud cover broke briefly. We also saw Hairy Dragonflies as well as more Norfolk Hawkers and also had a great view of a Chinese Water Deer. We also watched an Otter walking down a small road in front of our car one evening when we were going to How Hill to photograph one of the many beautiful windmills that the area is also renowned for.

For more photographs from our trip, please visit my website whose address is www.tonydunnwildlifephotography.co.uk

Tony Dunn