QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Newsletter No. 143 **Autumn 2013**

Chorley and District Natural History Society is a Registered Charity: Registration Number 513466

EDITORIAL

If Waxwings come to Chorley this winter, they probably won't need to leave as there are so many Rowan berries around the town, many in places where I've never noticed them before. Sadly, it's not looking likely that we'll have a Waxwing winter this year, although a few have been recorded in Northern Scotland. It does, however, beg the question as to why there are so many berries left, because usually at this time of year they have been stripped by thrushes and starlings. Where have they all gone?

Changing subject, Chorley Nats member John Cobham has won the Lancashire Magazine's photographic competition. The winning pictures will have a double page in December's issue. John will also have 5 pictures in the Lancashire Magazine's 2014 calendar, one of which is on the calendar's front cover. Congratulations John.

Croston , Lancashire

John Cobham

Finally, it's Garden Bird Survey time again. The results of last winter's survey are published in this Newsletter. Hopefully, this will encourage members to take part once again, as it is providing us with plenty of excellent records.

Neil Southworth (Editor)

FLORA REPORT

I mentioned in my last report that summer had arrived – and how! We had such a contrast to last year and it was good to be able to get out and enjoy all that nature had to offer. A walk on the first of July enabled one of our members to see common spotted orchids in good numbers and elsewhere both of the woundworts started to come into flower. The cold late spring was having its effect as we continued to have a slight overlap of some of the early flowers still blossoming, yet others coming out at their normal time. I was helping out with education on Cuerden Valley Park in early July when I noticed a flower that does not appear in our records. It is Scarlet Pimpernel and I had not seen it for more than 12 years. This was before I became flower recorder. Most of the kids were wondering what I was getting so excited about, but it is such a gorgeous small flower.

Scarlet Pimpernel

Another contrast to 2012 was the plethora of seeds and nuts appearing even in early September. These included blackberries, elder, horse chestnuts and acorns. I also noted a high percentage of knopper galls amongst the acorns.

There was also a report from near Yarrow Valley Park of Autumn Crocus but I am not sure whether the person reporting meant *Colchicum autumnale or Crocus sylvaticus.*

What do other botanists think?

David Beattie

INSECT REPORT

Good summer weather is good for us and good for insects. Lots of interesting Lepidoptera records this quarter.

Lower Burgh Meadows provided huge numbers of Narrow Bordered Five Spot Burnet Moths – over 1000 were estimated in early July. A couple of members are really enthusiastic moth recorders. One of these recorded at least 8 species new to the area at his garden during the quarter. Three of these were “Macros” - The Fen Wainscot, The Nutmeg, and The Beautiful Snout. His garden list is huge and the list for the area now exceeds 600 species.

Quite apart from these remarkable sightings, the same sharp eyed recorder found a Oak Bush Cricket in his garden. This is the second record for the area – the first was in 2007 in the same garden! There must be other sites for this distinctive little cricket. Eyes peeled please.

Dark Green Fritillary seen near Chorley

Speaking of second records for the area, on 2nd August a single Dark Green Fritillary was seen and photographed at Crosse Hall, Chorley. The only other local record of this lovely butterfly was in July 2006 at Belmont. There must have been an eruption of these this year, as lots were reported elsewhere in Lancashire. I expect that this was a vagrant, but there is no real reason for them not to occur locally. They are found as far north as Orkney, so our climate should not be a problem. They feed on Violets and will occur in a variety of habitats. The closest usual sites for the species are Silverdale and Ainsdale.

White Letter Hairstreaks were again found in the Yarrow valley. One was seen in an Euxton garden close to the Yarrow on 1st August, and the other in the area close to Euxton Cricket Club on 7th August. Purple Hairstreaks were seen at 5 sites in Belmont – two of which were previously unknown sites. Other good butterfly sightings included several Painted Ladies in Chorley gardens and at Cuerden; Brimstones at Coppull, Rivington and Anglezarke.

Both Small and Large Skippers fared well enough. Small Heath were seen in reasonable numbers on the Anglezarke Moors and at two sites in the Rivington area, but there was only one sighting of the Wall (Anglezarke on September 25th).

Dragonfly species were again reported chiefly from ponds at Cuerden, Hic Bibi, Healey Nab and Burgh Hall. Four Spotted and Broad Bodied Chasers breed at these sites and were seen often, as were Emperors. The pool at Healey Nab provided large numbers of Emerald Damselflies and Black Darters. Emerald Damselfly was also seen at Cuerden after a couple of blank years there.

Emerald Damselfy seen at Cuerden and Healey Nab

One recorder watched a Pipistrelle bat chasing a Southern Hawker. It is not known if the dragonfly evaded capture or not. The bat was watched after the dragonfly disappeared, but it did not seem to be any fatter!

Phil Kirk

BIRD REPORT

July

A pair of Great Crested Grebe with two young was note at Croston Twin Lakes on the 10th. Sadly, on the same date it was noted that the Little Grebe breeding attempt at Astley Park had failed due to a waterlogged nest.

Oystercatchers were much in evidence with parties of three at Anglezarke Reservoir (6th&7th), 3 at Euxton (7th), and 2 at Whittle (7th). A Redshank was at Anglezarke (27th). Common Sandpipers were at Anglezarke (6th), Belmont Reservoir (3 on the 7th) and Withnell Fold (28th). Snipe were at Eccleston (19th) and Withnell Fold (28th), when there was also Dunlin and Green Sandpiper present.

Dunlin

A Hobby was seen chasing House Martins over Gillibrands (23rd). A juvenile Kestrel was at Blue Waters on Healy Nab (7th). A family party of 3 or 4 Sparrowhawks was at Whittle (28th). An adult Mediterranean Gull was on Astley Park lake on 6th, 15th and 17th. The first returning Common Gull was on Anglezarke Reservoir on the 20th.

Kingfisher sightings came from Hoghton Bottoms (8th), Eccleston (12th), Cuerden Valley Park (22nd), and Common Bank lodge, where 2 or 3 birds hopefully represented a family group. Swifts finally returned to their territories during the first week at Coppull, Eccleston, Euxton, Whittle and a couple of sites in Chorley.

Grasshopper Warblers were still reeling on Lower Burgh Meadow on 7th and 12th. A Willow Tit was at Great Knowley (20th), and a party of 5 Crosbills was noted over Coppull (11th) with 2 over Anglezarke Reservoir (27th).

August

Little Grebes at Astley Park

Better news of the Little Grebes at Astley park, which finally managed to hatch a single chick around the 13th. At Croston Twin Lakes on the 20th a count of 40 Coot was made plus 8 Tufted Duck and 3 adult and 4 juvenile Great Crested Grebe. The first two Teal were back at Anglezarke Reservoir on the 31st.

Post-breeding flocks of Lapwing were noted including 80 at Charnock Richard (13th), 40 at Withnell Fold (18th) and 105 at Anglezarke Reservoir (23rd). A Common Sandpiper was on Yarrow Reservoir (17th), and Green Sandpipers were on the Douglas at Croston (4th), the Yarrow at Eccleston (6th), a pond near Syd Brook, Eccleston from 8th – 24th with two there on the 14th, and finally one at Withnell Fold (18th). Two female / juvenile Marsh Harriers were seen on Croston Moss (9th) and a single bird on the 24th. Hobbies were noted over Abbey Village (23rd) and Higher Wheelton (28th). Family parties of Kestrel were noted near Great Hill (4 or 5 on the 4th) and at Rivington (6 on the 18th). A pair of Sparrowhawk at Hartwood had two young. A Buzzard with begging juvenile was over Croston Moss (4th).

The pair of Common Terns at Yarrow Valley Park were noted with a week old chick on the 4th. Adults and chick had left the site by the 26th, but it is not known if the youngster fledged. A family party of 2 adult and 5 young Grey Partridge was noted at Croston on the 20th.

Last Swift sighting came from Eccleston on the 17th. 50 Swallow were noted going to roost on Lower Burgh Meadow on the 22nd and 70 were seen at Eccleston (24th) 30 House Martin were seen at Heapey on a wet evening (4th).

A Spotted Flycatcher at Eccleston on the 16th was a good sighting. A family party of 5 was in the more usual location of White Coppice (25th). Birds on the move included a Stonechat family at Rivington (18th), a Wheatear on Withnell Moor (25th) and a Redstart in a ploughed field at Eccleston (27th). Final record of interest was a Willow Tit on Croston Moss on the 9th.

Spotted Flycatcher at Eccleston on August 16th

September

Pink-footed Geese put in their first appearance of the autumn with a skein of 100 birds over Croston Moss on the 14th. A Teal was noted on Top Lodge at Yarrow Valley Park on the 15th, and had been joined by 3 more by the 30th. Teal numbers at Withnell Fold had increased from 10 (11th) to 22 by the 28th. Female Mandarin were seen on the Yarrow at Eccleston (6th & 11th) and at Yarrow Valley Park (26th).
A late Oystercatcher was at Anglezarke Reservoir on the 6th. A Green Sandpiper continued to be seen on a pond at Eccleston (7th & 15th). Snipe were noted at Withnell Fold (11th), Croston Moss (14th), Belmont (19th) and Yarrow Valley Park (22nd). Six golden Plover flew over Eccleston on the 29th. Post-breeding lapwing flocks included 120 at Belmont (19th) and 175 at Withnell Fold (28th).

A female / juvenile Marsh harrier was seen over fields by Yes Lane, Bretherton (18th). Hobby sightings came from Eccleston (14th) and Anglezarke Moor (24th). Two Pergrines on Morrison's chimney were confirmed as the breeding pair from 2011.

Chiffchaff

House Martins were still feeding young at Heath Charnock on the 21st, whilst other birds were on the move, including 30 at Ulnes Walton (3rd) and 20 at Coppull (22nd). Similarly Swallows were on their way south with 40 at White Coppice (1st), 60 over Croston Moss (5th), 50 at Withnell Fold (15th) and 30 at Rivington (22nd).

Chiffchaff were still singing in various places including Coppull (8th), White Coppice (8th), Croston Moss (14th), Chorley (21st) and Rivington (22nd). Last records of other warblers were Whitethroat on Croston Moss (8th), Sedge Warbler on Croston Moss (12th), and Willow Warbler at Yarrow Valley Park (11th). Two Whinchat were on Croston Moss (19th) and 5 Wheatear were on Anglezarke Moor (24th). Sadly, a Redstart was found dead at Great Knowley on the 23rd having flown into a window.

Many thanks to the following for submitting records:-

I.Ball, D.Beattie, D.Beevers, J.Bolton, J.Cobham, B.Derbyshire, D.Downing, T.Dunn, J.Edwards, N.Hepplestone, 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, L.Poxon, C.Rae, J.Riley, L.Rose, P.Ross, P.Rowlands, J.Smith, N.Southworth, R.Spencer, C.Thistlethwaite, J.Waidson, N.&T.West, T.Westhead, K.Woan.

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

Neil Southworth

GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

The Garden Bird Survey again took place during the winter months between December 2012 and March 2013. 22 completed forms were returned, which was one less than last year's return. Thank you to all those who took part. The distribution of gardens was as follows:-

Location	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	1	17	4
Size	Small	Medium	Large
	3	14	5

The medium sized suburban garden remains the most numerous contributor. The average number of species per garden was 22, which is the same as last year. Great Knowley was the place to be with gardens there recording 36, 35 and 29 species respectively. Only a garden at Euxton with a total of 31 managed to break their stranglehold. In fact gardens elsewhere appeared to be one or two species down on previous years.

The total number of species recorded this year was 51, an increase of 5 on the previous year, which had been a lower total than normal. There was no new addition to the list. The total number of species recorded in the 13 years or so that the survey has been running now stands at 66. The following chart is based on number of gardens visited by each species. A weighting is then used to separate species in case of equality. Thus the first three in the table visited all 22 gardens, but Blackbird was again the most frequent species based on the weighting.

The weighting system does produce a few anomalies such as the arrival in the Top 20 of Pheasant, which only visited 9 gardens but was a daily visitor in most of those. In contrast, Wren at 19 visited 18 gardens. House Sparrow is showing signs of recovering, having leapt up 5 places and back into the Top 10, having visited 18 gardens. Dropping down the chart, from 8th to 11th, is Collared Dove, which is perhaps being edged out by Woodpigeon, which now occupies 6th place, although the fact it is also a frequent victim of Sparrowhawk attacks might also be beginning to take its toll. ***Bullfinch*** and Great Spotted Woodpecker languish in 23rd and 24th place respectively, having previously occupied positions in the Top 20, and this supports impressions that neither is as common as it used to be. Nuthatch continue to make progress up the chart, although they have not yet found the delights on offer in the writer's garden! Perhaps, surprisingly, Goldfinch has slipped back a couple of places. I say surprisingly because in my experience it seems to be the commonest finch around at the moment.

Year					Species	Weighted score	Gardens visited
'13	**'12**	**'11**	**'03**	**'98**			
1	1	1	1	1	Blackbird	66	22
2	1=	1=	3	2	Blue Tit	63	22
3	3	3	1=	4	Robin	62	22
4	4	4=	4	3	Great Tit	59	21
5	5	4	5	7	Dunnock	55	21
6	7	6	14	15	Woodpigeon	49	19
7	6	9	6	6	Chaffinch	48	19
8	13	14	11	8	House Sparrow	44	18
9	10	11	6=	5	Magpie	42	19
10	9	8	10	13	Coal Tit	42	18
11	8	7	8	9	Collared Dove	39	19
12	14	12	13	14	Long-tailed Tit	38	21
13	11	13	16	17	Goldfinch	37	16
14	16	---			Nuthatch	34	16
15	12	10	14	11	Starling	33	16
16	15	15	9	10	Greenfinch	29	17
17	18	18	18	16	Jay	27	15
18	20	16	17	20	Song Thrush	25	16
19	19	16	12	12	Wren	23	18
20	--	--	--	--	Pheasant	18	9

Outside the Top 20, Siskin were recorded in 11 gardens, Blackcap in 5, Redwing in 4, Brambling in 3, Fieldfare in 2 and Chiffchaff in one. The species which didn't make the Top 20 were as follows:-

Siskin and Carrion Crow (11 gardens), Sparrowhawk and Bullfinch (10), Great Spotted Woodpecker (9), Goldcrest and Jackdaw (7), Stock Dove, Pied Wagtail and Blackcap (5), Redwing and Tawny Owl (4), Feral Pigeon, Moorhen, Tree Sparrow, Mistle Thrush, Reed Bunting, Brambling and Kestrel (3), Mallard, Grey Heron, Black-headed Gull, Fieldfare, Rook, Treecreeper and Lesser Redpoll (2), and Buzzard, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit and Chiffchaff (one each).

We will again be running the survey on the same basis in the coming winter, so I look forward to receiving all your forms, plus perhaps a few more besides?

FUNGI IN CHORLEY CEMETERY

The Society's Fungal Foray this year was held on a lovely warm and sunny morning, 29th September 2013 in Chorley Cemetery, a site several members considered to be an unlikely venue for a field trip but it really is a 'Treasure Trove' for species of fungi that are uncommon in the Chorley area.

My attention was first drawn to the potential of the site for fungi in September 2010 when a member discovered an unusual fungus by his family grave and asked me to confirm its identification. I confirmed it as a fine example of the White Saddle *(Helvella crispa).* Looking round nearby, I found several other fungi and my list of species identified has grown since that initial visit to a place I hadn't visited regularly in the past for personal reasons.

Bloody Brittlegill

The cemetery has a wide variety of trees, both native species such as Birch and Oak and planted conifers, producing lots of different conditions for potential fungi species. As well as common ubiquitous species such as The Deceiver, *(Laccaria laccata*), Sulphur Tuft *(Hypholoma fasciculare),* Common and Shaggy Inkcaps *(Coprinus atramentarius & C. comatus)* and the inevitable Honey fungus *(Armillaria mellea agg.),* etc. as expected, there were common species associated with Birch including Brown Birch Bolete *(Leccinum scabrum),* Brown Rollrim

Saffron Milkcap

(Paxillus involutus), Birch Knight *(Tricholoma fulvum)* and Birch Milkcap *(Lactarius tabidus)*, etc. plus Oakbug Milkcap *(Lactarius quietus),* etc. with Oak. Species associated with the conifer trees included Bloody Brittlegill *(Russula sanguinaria)* and Saffron Milkcap *(Lactarius deliciosus),* etc, species that are uncommon in the Chorley area and I have only seen in the past at places such as in the pinewoods at the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve at Southport and more distant localities.

Copper Spike

Best of all for me was being shown by the foray leader, Tony Dunn (I hadn't wanted to commit myself to leading the society's foray this year due to recent medical problems) and his 'fungal friend' Dave, good numbers of Copper Spike *(Chroogomphus rutilus),* a species that I have never seen before in over 30 years of being interested in fungi and certainly didn't expect to see on this foray on a site that is less than 1/4 mile from my home!

Thanks to Tony and Dave for leading an interesting and enjoyable foray attended by just nine members.

Special thanks to Michael Valentine, a fellow member of the North West Fungus group, who came to Chorley Cemetery on 6th October 2013 to take photographs of some of the more uncommon species of fungi. His photographs of ***Bloody Brittlegill***, ***Saffron Milkcap*** and ***Copper Spike*** are reproduced in the article with permission. The cemetery is also one of the sites in the Chorley area where the Autumn Crocus grows. Michael's photograph of this flower taken on the same day is also included.

Joyce Riley

BOOK REVIEW

Plants for Bees: A Guide to the Plants that Benefit the Bees of the British Isles
By W.D.J. Kirk & F.N. Howes

Published by the International Bee Research Association, Cardiff

This book was published in 2012 but I only bought my copy in August 2013. The title is something of a misnomer as you might be led to think it was a book all about plants. In fact the first four chapters are all about bees. The first chapter is a short introduction to the many perils bees are subject to worldwide. Bees are closely related to ants and wasps in the Order Hymenoptera. True bees evolved, like wasps, from a form of predatory solitary wasp in the Cretaceous Period some 146 to 66 million years ago. From this early beginning we find that there have evolved some 25,000 species of bee in the world today with around 270 species having been recorded at some time in the UK.

The next three chapters are on Honeybees, Bumblebees and finally Solitary Bees respectively.

There is one species of honey bee (*Apis mellifera)* in the UK though it is not a true native. All honeybees belong to this one species which is thought to have originated in Southern Asia and now are to be found wild throughout southern Europe, Asia and Australasia. Elsewhere in the world, including in the UK, they have been introduced by man because of their great value in producing a sweetener, honey, long before the use of sugar from sugar-cane was widespread.

There are almost 250 species of bumblebee worldwide all belonging to the genus *Bombus.* In the UK we have had 27 species of bumblebee although at the present that number is reduced to 24 resident breeding species. Three species have been lost in recent years, probably due to habitat loss because of changes in agricultural practices and the widespread use of insecticides. A further five species are in long term decline and are seriously threatened. The majority of these threatened species are long-tongued bumblebees and their decline is considered to be a consequence of the decline in numbers of plants with long flower tubes, such as red clover (*Trifolium pratense)* which is not as commonly sown by farmers as it used to be.

The commonest, most widespread, of our bumblebees and perhaps the most likely ones to be seen in Chorley fields and gardens are the White-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lucorum*), the Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*B. terrestris*), both of which have two banded white tails, the Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum)* which has banded red tails, the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*) which has black-bodied red tails, the Garden Bumblebee (*B. hortorum*) which has three banded white tails and the Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) which has brown tails and whose name should not be confused with the wool carder bee (*Anthidium manicatum*) which is a solitary bee. That they are generally common and wide spread throughout the UK does not mean they are

necessarily common in Chorley because as far as I know no census of bumblebees has ever been carried out in our area.

Some of the UK's bumblebees are of recent arrival. One, the Tree Bumblebee (*B. hypnorum)* was first observed in southern England in 2000 but since then it has spread rapidly across southern England and Wales. Two, the Cryptic Bumblebee (*B. cryptarum*) and the Northern White-tailed Bumblebee (*B. magnus*) were only separated from *B. lucorum* in the past decade.

By far the most numerous type of bee in the UK are the Solitary Bees of which some 241 species have so far been recorded. They include the mining bees, the stem nester bees, the mason bees , the leafcutter bees, the wool carder bee, the carpenter bee and the cuckoo bees; names which refer to their methods of nest-forming. We have 5 families of mining bee, divided into 12 different genera and totalling 136 species but the remaining 8 families of bees are rather fewer in their number of species. They comprise 12 species of stem nesters (*Hylaeus spp.*); 4 genera of mason bees (*Chelostoma* – 2 species, *Heriades* – 2 species*, Hoplitis* – 2 species and *Osmia* – 12 species; 1 genus of leafcutter bees with 9 species; 1 genus of wool carder bee with only 1 species (*Anthidium)* ; 2 genera of carpenter bees each comprising a single species; and 3 families with 6 genera of Cuckoo bees making the second largest group of 66 species after the mining bees (*Sphecodes* – 17 species*, Stelis* – 4 species*, Coelioxys* – 8 species*, Nomada* – 33 species*, Epeolus* – 2 species and *Melecta* with 2 species*.*

After these first four chapters devoted to bees the last chapter, by far the largest chapter with 224 pages, is devoted to a detailed account of the best plants for the various types of bees. This provides an invaluable guide not only to gardeners anxious to attract bees of all types but to conservationists responsible for nature reserves and farmers glad to see their crops pollinated.

The book is well illustrated with a large number of colour photographs showing many of the bee species well enough to make identification possible although some of the bee photographs are not perfectly focussed, always a problem when taking shots of a moving insect at a high degree of magnification. There are lots of photographs too of flowers, often with bees feeding on them and useful details about which months the plants flower in and are therefore providing either or both nectar and pollen for the bees. The authors provide a sensible warning that double flower are of little use to bees however much they may, or may not, be liked by gardeners.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in bees and to all gardeners as a guide to which plants to encourage. I hope it will encourage naturalists to record the various bees they may see around Chorley. We may then have some idea of how richly, or otherwise, we are endowed with bees and persuade gardeners to plant more bee friendly plants to further encourage an increase in our bee population of all species.

Robert Yates