

# GNS NEWS

DECEMBER 2014



Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society  
[www.glosnats.org](http://www.glosnats.org)

# Contents

Letter from the Chair	3-4
Weather July to September 2014	5
Bushy Lichens	6-7
The Forest of Dean Willow Tit Project	8-10
Gloucestershire Dragonfly Atlas	11
Yet More Odonatological Discoveries in The Cotswold Water Park!	12-16
Forest of Dean Conservation Panel	17
Field Meeting, Haresfield Beacon and Vinegar Hill, 14 Sept 2014	18-19
Rampages with a Newt Trap 2014	20-23
Moseley Green and New Fancy, 7th June, 2014	24-25
Summary of 2014 BTO Peregrine Survey	26
A Raptor Monitoring Group for Gloucestershire	27
Wildlife Recording Information Sheets	28-32
Diary	33-34
The Gloucestershire Naturalist – back issues	34
Society Officers and Contacts	35

## Copy Deadline for next issue: 1st February 2015

Send items to the Editor: Kate Kibble

5 Elliott Place, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 3NH.

Email: [kkibble@sky.com](mailto:kkibble@sky.com)

Front cover photo: Newly emerging downy emerald *Cordulia aenea* and exuvia, 2014 © Gareth Harris

# Letter from the Chair

## Dear Members

Here we are in November, at the onset of the winter, and the GNS Executive Committee is back into its seasonal round of meetings. One of the issues under discussion has been a revision of the Society's "Rules", which have not been amended for about twenty years. We plan to propose some modest amendments at the Annual General Meeting in March 2015, so that the Rules reflect better the role undertaken by GNS; among other things, we need to recruit new Committee members with new ideas and new outlooks; I would be very glad to hear from any member willing to put his or her name forward.

In the meantime, the Society has continued its tasks of observing, recording and publishing the county's flora and fauna. During the summer, Richard Lansdown's "Provisional Red Data Book of Gloucestershire Bryophytes" has been published as a special number of "The Gloucestershire Naturalist (TGN)". The book's importance goes well beyond the limits of the county, and we hope it may be a model for other counties; the Society congratulates Richard for publishing such a valuable book on a neglected group, and one that is so readable and interesting for the non expert in mosses and liverworts. Furthermore, another issue of TGN, number 26, has just appeared, with the reports on 2013 from most county recorders on their speciality. At a recent meeting of the GNS Scientific and Publications Sub-Committee, plans for new issues of TGN were mentioned, including a new volume on the county's dragonflies, and new floras of particular areas of the county (the Forest of Dean and Alney Island). The preparation of the next county Bird Report (for the year 2013) is underway, in the very capable hands of Gordon Kirk, one of the authors of the "Birds of Gloucestershire". Much of the work of the recorders goes on quietly and unobtrusively behind the scenes yet collection, storage and analysis of data on different taxa is a crucial task, undertaken in conjunction with the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records. It is clear that the work of the recorders is one of the crucial aspects of the activities of GNS, and much of the discussions of the Executive Committee centre on how best to support the Recorders.

Another activity that has been continuing through the summer is the series of Wildlife Training Courses, organised in conjunction with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT). More than a dozen such courses have been held on a variety of subjects, and the response was such that we plan to hold similar courses again next summer. The response from participants has generally been enthusiastic, though as yet we do not seem to have recruited many new members, nor awakened too many new vocations as naturalists/recorders. We are reviewing the results with GWT, to see how we might improve future planning and content, and indeed are keeping in very close touch with GWT on a variety of joint activities.

The new Butterfly Conservation reserve at Rough Bank, a major site for butterflies and plants of limestone grassland on the edge of the Cotswolds, was duly opened in late August, in the presence not only of a goodly number of GNS members, but also of the new Chairman of Natural England (NE). He said that his vision was for NE to be a respected scientific body, that provided the Government with objective information on the urgent conservation issues of the day: we shall be watching his progress in this ambitious aim! The reserve, on the Cotswold scarp near Cranham and Birdlip, is now open to the public, and a lovely site it is too, altogether worth a visit.

Another issue, which has taken up much of the GNS Executive Committee's time over the last year, is the plan to construct a new college, road and other facilities at Cinderford Northern Quarter. The Forest of Dean District Council's Planning Committee duly gave the green light for the project to proceed in early November. Andrew Bluett, who has reported extensively on this issue in GNS News, and I attended the meeting; while the environmental and conservation issues were given a broad airing (notably through a very balanced presentation made on behalf of the Dean Natural Alliance) Councillors were clearly swayed by the promises of infrastructure and jobs on this complicated site where open cast mining has occurred in the recent past. However, there is still much to be done before the project is completed and GNS will continue to make its voice heard, notably in insisting on full mitigation and compensation for any losses to conservation.

Our programme of field meetings continues through the winter, with many of the meetings aimed at further investigating some of the questions posed about particular sites: thus, to follow the meeting at Plusterwine where we looked at saltmarsh creation by the Environment Agency (in which GNS has taken part in the recording), we shall be organising a meeting at the GWT reserve at Hobbs Quarry, in order to contribute new data to the Management Plan.

And please don't forget the wide-ranging series of indoor meeting, organised in Cirencester by the Cirencester branch. All members are welcome and the talks present a fascinating variety of illustrated presentations on all aspects of natural history.

Finally, a wintry thought as the evenings draw in; in the Severn and Avon Vales, wet fields and full ditches are beginning to appear again, and with them the annual arrival of geese from further north. Sadly, not so many of the 'whitefronts' of Russian origin which used to occur, but mainly Canada and greylag geese. Many naturalists turn up their noses at these "feral" or half-wild species yet I defy you not to be impressed by the spectacle of a thousand of these birds, with the rush of wings, the noisy calls, the interactive behaviour, and the sheer numbers. I have recently started finding colour ringed Canada geese marked in the summer at a roosting site on Lake Windermere, in addition to the ringed greylags which are born in the Dean and South Wales, migrate to Glasgow to moult, then return to winter in the vale; take a look for yourselves, I assure you it's a fascinating sight!

**Mike Smart**

Hon. Chairman, GNS

# The weather July to September 2014

Most of the UK had a warm, fairly sunny and dry July; it was the eighth successive month with above average temperatures over the UK as a whole and 19 July was the hottest day of the year so far with temperatures of 32°C in Kent. Nationally, rainfall was below average, making it the driest July since 2006, with only 57% of the average rainfall in the South West and South Wales, and only 70% in the Midlands. Winds were mostly light, but a “Spanish plume” spread warm air northwards across the UK on 20 July and many places had large amounts of rain in short periods and lightning storms. In the Severn Vale the weather was warm and dry for much of the month, with maximum of 29°C in Gloucester on 24 July.

At a national level, the UK had its coolest August since 1993 and its wettest since 2004. There was a prolonged cool period between 9 and 28 August, during which the temperature did not exceed 25°C anywhere. These cool and wet conditions were largely due to low pressure, including the remnants of ex-hurricane Bertha which tracked across the UK on 10/11 August, while ex-hurricane Cristobal passed on 29/30 August, going much further to the north. It was a wet month, much wetter than July and the rainfall for both the Midlands and southwest England and Wales was about 140% over the 30 year average. The heaviest rainfall, in the wake of hurricane Bertha was 21 mm in Gloucester. The weather relented on 31 August, a fine sunny day, at last with the temperature reaching 23°C in Gloucester. The total Gloucester rainfall in August was well above average at 76mm.

September was dominated by high pressure, bringing fine and settled early autumn weather, perhaps a result of the jet stream remaining further to the north of the British Isles than usual. There were only a few short interruptions to this stable picture: heavy rain in northeast Scotland on 7 September, localised thundery rain in southern England on 19/20 September and some thick fog on 23, 29 and 30 September. Rainfall was limited and temperatures above average in most regions of the UK, though with no exceptionally high temperatures. This is only the fifth occasion that the UK mean temperature has equalled or exceeded that of August, and was provisionally the driest September in a series going back to 1910, though was only slightly drier than September 1959. In the Severn Vale, there was heavy cloud and drizzle on the southwest wind during 1 September, with a lowest temperature of 7°C. Then an Indian summer hit with stationary high pressure and no rain from 2 to 8 September. Temperatures reached 22 or 23°C on some days, though only 7°C at night on 7 September. The next ten days were anti-cyclonic: dry with high pressure, easterly winds, hazy sunshine and no rain. Temperatures were over 20°C from 15 to 17 September. A front moved north-south on 18-19 September, bringing the first slight rain to Gloucester for more than two weeks. There was no further rain until the end of the month and total rainfall in Gloucester in September was only 10mm.

# Bushy Lichens



Oak twig from Forest of Dean with three bushy lichens: *Ramalina farinacea* bottom left, *Evernia prunastri* bottom right, *Usnea subfloridana* top middle.

There are four fairly common bushy lichens in Gloucestershire. They are only found on bark in this county, and are most abundant where the air is cleanest, for example in the Forest of Dean.



*Evernia prunastri*.

The most common, and the most pollution tolerant, is *Evernia prunastri*. When growing well, this is a thing of beauty several inches across, with its flattened thallus of regular forking upswept branches, silvery grey above and paler below.

The next most common is *Ramalina farinacea*. This also has a thallus of flattened straps, but they are about the same colour grey on both sides. When mature it often has oval ulcers (soralia) on the edge of the straps which produce a fine grey powder (*soredia*) which is a means of vegetative reproduction. You will need a hand lens to see this.



*Ramalina farinacea*.

However, both of these are variable, and it can be quite a judgement call to decide whether the underside is paler or not. The pathetic little scraps one encounters in urban gardens can be particularly inscrutable. Often, the colour difference is more apparent when they are wetted.

Another moderately common *Ramalina* is *Ramalina fastigiata*. This is characterised by its trumpets -well that's what it looks like to me- which are the apothecia (fruit) on the ends of the thallus straps. It often

forms a tight pompom. I think of this as a species of bright windy places, such as hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* bushes along the Severn shore or scrub on the Cotswold escarpment.

Finally there are the *Usneas*. These are the real beard lichens. Unlike *Ramalina* and *Evernia*, *Usnea* is circular in cross-section with a central stiff core like wire in a cable. If you pull it gently this core is revealed.

The commonest *Usnea* is *Usnea subfloridana*. Look for its blackened base. This is a species of moderately well-lit trees in humid conditions so is often in woodland glades.

I have little doubt that the *Usnea* picture is actually a lot more complicated than this suggests. While *Usnea subfloridana* is certainly the most common, there are seven other species recorded in Gloucestershire, but they do not readily key out except when well grown and mature, and even experienced lichenologists have difficulty.



Wetted *Evernia* showing green upper surface on left, and mostly white under surface on right.



Wetted *Ramalina* is more or less the same colour on both surfaces.



*Ramalina fastigiata*.



*Evernia* cross-section. Flattened. Green mostly on upper surface.



*Usnea*. Circular in cross section.



*Ramalina*. Flattened. Equally green top and bottom.

For example, there is *Usnea cornuta* which grows in more open conditions such as on the trunks of roadside trees (if the air is clean enough). This lacks the blackened base and has slight constrictions where branches join the main stem.

If you know a site where bushy lichens are common, particularly one in a tetrad that has not yet been visited, I would love to hear about it.

**Juliet Bailey**

GNS Lichen Recorder



*Usnea subfloridana* showing blackened base.

# The Forest Of Dean Willow Tit Project – Survey Results For 2014

In the December 2013 edition of GNS News, Rob Husbands and I closed our report for 2013 by expressing a feeling of trepidation at what 2014 held in store for the Dean's willow tit *Poecile montanus* population. Unfortunately our fears seem to have been well founded and we are sad to say this report does not offer any encouragement.

Our studies for 2014 have been greatly assisted by another generous grant from the GNS to purchase two cameras with the capability of recording activity at willow tit nests for extended periods of time. The cameras worked admirably but as we shall see in the report our opportunities for using them were severely restricted. Rob and I would once again like to thank the GNS for their interest in our project and for the vital and continued support. We would also like to thank Lewis Thomson and Scott Marshall for their invaluable assistance in the field and for the co-operation of the Forestry Commission and the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

To recap on 2011 and 2012; in 2011 we observed five breeding pairs and obtained hard evidence to suggest breeding attempts at four other locations. Following more work we discovered seven breeding attempts in 2012 and suspected breeding at one other location. Interestingly there were other territories that we located which just had a singing male without a female. In 2013 the story was rather different with nearly all the previously noted territories, plus a couple of newly discovered ones, showing the presence of willow tits. However in all but three cases

they were only occupied by singing males that had lost their females of the previous season and did not manage to attract a new mate, or were occupied by lone males that sang vainly all spring for a mate.

In 2014 we only managed to locate one breeding pair. The male of this pair was a bird Rob had ringed in 2012 and had bred successfully in 2011 and 2012. He had lost his mate by 2013 so did not breed in that year but found a new mate by the spring of 2014. This pair successfully fledged eight chicks from a nest boring in one of our polystyrene filled nest boxes. This is the only good news we have to report.

At the territories of the three breeding attempts located in 2013, two were not occupied at all and one had a male present that was involved in boring a nest cavity and making a nest in one of our boxes. The camera we positioned here never revealed the presence of a mate and the nest never contained eggs. We were never able to prove that he had a mate and indeed he often ranged considerably singing loudly as if trying to attract one.



A willow tit *Poecile montanus* bearing an identification ring  
© Nick Christian



Other previously occupied territories were either unoccupied by willow tits or were tenanted by a male bird without a mate.

Taken simply as a whole, since our investigations began in earnest in 2011, out of 21 occupied territories or locations where the presence of willow tits was identified by recent nest cavities, only one currently has a breeding pair and sixteen now reveal no evidence of occupation by willow tit/s. Not only has the 2011 figure of nine nesting attempts declined but so too have the numbers of lone singing males, suggesting that they have died or been predated without producing young.

Rob and I would not suggest that we have located all the breeding willow tits in the Dean, but we are confident we have the measure of them in what is now their core breeding area of East and North Dean. However, it is painfully apparent that even here they are struggling to survive. Our lack of success in locating willow tits in West Dean and to the South, also their apparent absence from the Dean's outlying woodland where they historically bred, suggests that their numbers are extremely low or even non-existent here.

It is clear that the Dean's willow tit population has diminished in recent years to an extremely low level, indeed to a level where breeding productivity is so feeble that not enough youngsters are being produced to maintain the population. The tipping point may already have been reached and it is quite likely that the willow tit will disappear from the Dean as a breeding species, as indeed it has already done so from many areas of Eastern England in particular.

Rob and I are only able to speculate over the reasons for this catastrophic decline. The willow tit was only ever a localised breeder anywhere in Britain and its specialized breeding requirements probably limited it from spreading and becoming more abundant. Therefore any negative effect or effects on their breeding and survival biology is likely to have far-reaching consequences. There undoubtedly have been growing pressures on British willow tits over at least the last 30 years and a combination of factors are likely to be responsible.

The steady rise of the great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* population would seem to play a large part in the failure of many willow tit breeding attempts. These woodpeckers are efficient predators easily capable of opening up willow tit nest cavities, destroying the contents and perhaps even catching and killing the incubating female inside. In the Dean we have recorded a number of nest failures as a result of this species which is very common in all areas of woodland.



Polystyrene removed from a nest box  
© Nick Christian



Rob using an inspection camera to check on the contents of one of our boxes © Nick Christian

In the Dean we have noted a steady increase in the coal tit *Periparus ater* population. Whilst this species does not directly compete for nest sites it certainly does for food resources. The woods of the Dean are thronging with this species and they are very successful breeders, feeding on the same conifer seeds and insects as the willow tit.

Loss of suitable breeding habitat may also be a factor. Woodland that becomes too mature does not generally offer enough suitable rotten wood as nest sites. We are not sure if this is a critical situation in the Dean as there appears to be plenty of areas that are suitable for willow tits but where they are now absent. However, the increasing maturity of the Dean's woodland areas may be reducing these suitable pieces of woodland or at least fragmenting them and, coupled with their poor breeding success, this may be adding to the problem. Observers in other areas of Britain where willow tits have recently disappeared also note that the habitat is still suitable for them.

Our ringing activities have interestingly revealed that there are more male willow tits present than females. Also the males that Rob ringed as part of a pair have survived more successfully from year to year than their mates. We monitored six ringed males and five of them outlived their mates. The sixth male disappeared along with his mate and we have been unable to locate either of them in 2014. Our observations of un-ringed males holding territories that were also once occupied by pairs produced the same result.

Quite why males survive better is a question we don't know the answer to and indeed studies in Finland found that males and females generally survived in equal proportion from season to season. Of course the rigours of the Finnish climate make it a harsher habitat for willow tits to survive than in Britain, so the species has to be tough. But perhaps in Britain the changing challenges to willow tits have created a situation where females are more susceptible to predation or increased competition for food.

Interestingly it is worth recording that during our willow tit studies Rob and I have noted a sharp decline in the marsh tit *Poecile palustris* population in North and East Dean. It is a species that looks almost identical to the willow tit and often occupies the same habitat.

Rob and I are continuing our studies and as always we are very keen to hear of any willow tit sightings and to liaise with anyone who has information regarding willow tits in general.

**Nick Christian** 01989 567122

**Rob Husbands** 01594 542185

# Gloucestershire Dragonfly Atlas

Now that the “Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland” has been published - in May 2014, after a five year recording effort, it is time for me to do the same for Gloucestershire. Sonia Holland’s “The Distribution of Dragonflies in Gloucestershire” requires updating as several new species have been seen in the county since its publication in 1991.

A considerable amount of time over the past few years was spent in travelling the county to record species and fill in the gaps so that the distribution of species in each 10km square in Gloucestershire’s Vice-counties of 33 and 34 was as well covered as possible.

Many thanks are due to all who sent in records/sightings during that period.

To make the Gloucestershire Dragonfly Atlas as up to date as possible, I would love to receive any outstanding records/sightings that anyone has lurking in their field notebooks.

Please, either send them to me, Ingrid Twissell, by post or email, with the following minimum details:

Name:

Date:

Species:

Location: (Grid Ref, 6-figure if possible).

Further information of species abundance, mating, egg-laying, emergence or larvae would be very useful in establishing breeding status.

If a rare or scarce species is noted, a photograph or description may be necessary.

The records could be entered on to an Excel spreadsheet before being sent to me, or by using the GNS Universal Nature Recording System, the on-line system run by Richard Beal. Contact [Richard.Beaal@richardbeal.com](mailto:Richard.Beaal@richardbeal.com) for a password in order to use the system.

I look forward to receiving your sightings.

**Ingrid Twissell,**

Gloucestershire Dragonfly Recorder,

Arfonia,

The Green,

Churchdown,

Glos. GL3 2LE

[canditwissell@btinternet.com](mailto:canditwissell@btinternet.com)

# Yet More Odonatological Discoveries in the Cotswold Water Park!

During spring and summer 2014 a series of important discoveries further extended our knowledge and understanding of the importance of the Cotswold Water Park's (CWP) dragonfly assemblage. These surveys represent continued survey and monitoring as part of the Cotswold Water Park Dragonfly Atlas Project.

The Cotswold Water Park Trust launched the Dragonfly Atlas Project in 2008 to coincide with the national atlas project coordinated by the British Dragonfly Society. The national atlas project aimed to stimulate the recording and survey of dragonflies and damselflies across the UK. This culminated in the publication of the atlas in May 2014<sup>1</sup>.

The CWP Dragonfly Atlas Project was launched to promote the local recording of dragonflies, ultimately to publish an account of the CWP's important dragonfly assemblage where around a half of the UK's may be found.

The CWP is recognised regionally and nationally as an important location for a variety of species. The expansion of a number of species has been facilitated by the creation of new wetlands and lakes by the minerals industry. It also appears likely that climate change is also facilitating other changes noted in the range of some species.

The CWP's dragonfly atlas is currently in draft and, during the drafting of species accounts, gaps in knowledge regarding three species in particular became clear; these were the downy emerald *Cordulia aenea*, scarce blue-tailed damselfly *Ischnura pumilio* and the hairy dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*.

During the review of the CWP Biodiversity Action Plan prior to its publication in 2008<sup>2</sup>, a number of targets and actions were added to promote the study and conservation of dragonflies and damselflies in the CWP, with particular focus upon the nationally scarce species, the scarce blue-tailed damselfly and the downy emerald. These targets and actions include targets to promote survey and monitoring, promote optimal site management, promote the downy emerald and increase populations of the scarce blue-tailed damselfly.

The downy emerald has been known from the CWP since the late 1980s. It was first recorded in the CWP in 1988 and 1989 at three locations in the Eastern and Western Section<sup>3</sup>. Although it has consolidated its range in the Somerford Keynes area and Whelford area sightings of adults elsewhere suggest a wider distribution than currently understood.

The scarce blue-tailed damselfly has also been recorded in the CWP since the 1980s. Towards the end of 2012 the British Dragonfly Society had received 21 records from the vice-county recorders and other sources<sup>4</sup>; the majority of these records (12 records) resulted from Dr Tony Fox's surveys of 1987<sup>5</sup>, and from active mineral sites.

The hairy dragonfly conversely was first recorded in the CWP in 2008 with a further four records by the end of 2012. It has recently extended its range in the UK, likely in response to warmer summers and climate change. Elsewhere in the UK this has included an extension onto less traditional habitats such as gravel pits. The colonisation of sites in the CWP is therefore likely and perhaps has already begun.

In spring 2014 a small grant (via section 106 funding administered by Cotswold District Council) allowed for a more detailed assessment of sites in the CWP for these three species in particular.

The aims were to simply survey for new populations of these species and confirm breeding wherever possible.

Undertaking such surveys in the CWP is not without considerable logistics; the majority of the sites selected for survey were privately-owned sites. In many cases the publicly-accessible sites (such as Wildlife Trust and CWPT reserves) have been fairly well surveyed, and so the focus of these surveys was upon the privately-owned sites. In the case of the scarce blue-tailed damselfly the surveys would target active quarries. As a result, considerable time was spent liaising with landowners and satisfying the many health and safety requirements of the minerals industry. It is noteworthy that all landowners and mineral companies approached have been very supportive of this work. It is likely that relationships with landowners forged during my 10 year employment by the Cotswold Water Park Trust facilitated these surveys.

### Summary of outcomes

At time of writing the reporting of this work is almost complete. Surveys were targeted to the appropriate flight periods of each species, the latest of which is the scarce blue-tailed damselfly (peaking June to July ordinarily). Hence reporting of this work is possible before the end of the dragonfly survey season. The purpose of this article is to provide a brief summary of the outcomes of these surveys.

In all, over 70 survey visits were undertaken to 40 sites across the CWP, searching for and surveying sites with suitable habitat for the three target species. The three species have differing habitat requirements so unfortunately there was little overlap in survey effort!



Newly emerging downy emerald *Cordulia aenea* and exuvia, 2014 © Gareth Harris

### Downy Emerald

Over 20 sites were surveyed for downy emerald; these were typically sites that offered suitable habitat but hadn't been surveyed for this species previously. This species was recorded at 10 locations, of which five were previously unknown. Breeding was proven for the first time at three such sites.

Of note were two adjacent privately-owned sites near to Somerford Keynes; together they offer considerable suitable breeding habitat. What was unexpected however was the scale of the population found here, with large numbers of exuvia and emerging adults observed on a number of occasions. Together they support the largest concentration of downy emerald in the CWP, with large numbers of adults emerging in focussed areas simultaneously across the sites. Following such mass emergences they

frequently gather in the adjacent mature trees in vast numbers, with up to 100 individuals or more.

Date	Individuals recorded					
	30/4/14		5/5/14		19/5/14	
Site	Exuvia	Emergent	Exuvia	Emergent	Exuvia	Emergent
Site 1	10	11	48	20	27	0
Site 2	2	4	4	6	14	0
Total individuals	12	15	52	26	41	0

Table 1 Total individuals recorded at Site 1 and Site 2 (exuvia and newly-emerging adults).

Table 1 highlights the impressive numbers recorded as exuvia or emergent adults on survey dates in April and May. In all, a total of 146 individuals were recorded in this way following a search of shorelines and vegetation where access permitted. Much of these sites could not be surveyed without the use of a boat, so these numbers are considered to be conservative underestimates.

The downy emerald is considered now to be far more abundant and widespread across the CWP than previously known. Many of the mature gravel pits offering suitable habitat are now all-too-often inaccessible and privately-owned. It is likely that many more such breeding sites remain to be found in the CWP. The Cotswold Water Park may comprise a population of downy emerald of national note and importance, not least because of the geographic extent and apparent recent expansion.

### Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly

A search for suitable habitat, of appropriate structure and age, led to the discovery of small colonies at two locations.

An exciting discovery was made at Shorcote Quarry. A colony was found in one of the active pits, where they were breeding within the temporary shallow pools, sheltering amongst water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides* and apparently favouring the pools with considerable cover of stoneworts, *Chara sp.* The size of the colony was something of a surprise since we normally find very small numbers in the CWP. A colony of 14 adults was found on the first visit. A second visit highlighted the fragile nature of these colonies in the CWP; a change in the de-watering regime of the active gravel pit (which was being actively quarried at the opposite end to the damselfly population) resulted in complete flooding of the gravel pit. Crestfallen, I presumed this meant the end of the colony. During a return visit a few weeks later, de-watering had commenced again and the small shallow pools being used by the scarce blue-tailed damselfly were exposed once more. Although a smaller number of adults were recorded, they included a female of the form *aurantiaca*, indicating recent emergence. It appeared that emergence of the colony had continued despite the flood event. Gravel extraction of this pit is almost complete and restoration and landscaping works are expected to commence in coming months.

A second colony was also found at another quarry in the central section of CWP; only two individuals were recorded on two visits. Both these colonies will be lost in the long term but there may be scope to safeguard them for another season.



Male scarce blue-tailed damselfly *Ischnura pumilio*, Shorncliffe Quarry, 12th June 2014 © Gareth Harris

These two colonies confirm that the species maintains a foothold in the CWP and indeed continues to be a breeding species. It seems likely that small populations remain in the CWP each year but due to their location within active mineral sites they remain undetected.

Maintenance of this species in the CWP in the long term will be difficult since it relies at present upon the opportunities afforded by mineral extraction. Its conservation therefore will rely upon the goodwill and effort of the mineral industry; whilst I have no doubt that the industry possesses that goodwill, considerable efforts will be required.

### **Hairy Dragonfly**

Fieldwork for downy emerald on the 5th May led to a chance encounter with this species and then the discovery of a single exuvia, confirming local breeding, at Swillbrook Lakes Reserve. This exuvia was collected and a further visit to the location was made on the 7th May with Steve Covey, Vice County Recorder for North Wiltshire (within which this location lies, despite being in Gloucestershire County). A second exuvia was located further confirming successful breeding.

Later visits on the 15th May found an ovipositing female at the north end of the reserve, and a patrolling male at the southern end of the reserve. This confirms that this species has successfully colonised the CWP and successfully bred in one year at least!

This is the 22nd confirmed breeding species for the CWP, confirming the CWP's reputation as a regionally and nationally important location for its dragonfly assemblage.

### **Further work**

Surveys will continue in 2014 for the scarce blue-tailed damselfly, which in previous years has been recorded as late as the last week of August.

Additional surveys are planned in 2015, to monitor the sites with scarce blue-tailed damselfly



Habitat supporting the breeding colony of scarce blue-tailed damselfly, Shorncote Quarry, 12th June 2014 © Gareth Harris

found in 2014, as well as to monitor the sites with potentially suitable habitat. I will continue to explore the potential with mineral companies to provide longer-term breeding habitat for this species too.

Core breeding sites of the downy emerald will be monitored again whilst new breeding sites will also be sought in order to assess the true breeding range in the CWP.

Swillbrook Lakes Reserve will continue to be monitored for its hairy dragonfly population to confirm establishment in the longer term and to confirm breeding.

The surveys of 2014 further confirm the biodiversity importance of the Cotswold Water Park. They also confirm that greater survey effort leads to further discoveries. Through climate change and ongoing vegetation succession the Cotswold Water Park is expected to yield more surprises as additional dragonfly species colonise.

With thanks to Lower Mill Estate and Cotswold District Council for funding this work, as well as over 40 landowners who supported this work by facilitating access to their lakes. Of note are the mineral operators who enabled access to active gravel pits to undertake these surveys, including Hanson Plc, Hills Quarry Products and the Cullimore Group. Thanks also to Ben Welbourn, Cotswold Water Park Trust. Dave Smallshire of the British Dragonfly Society is thanked for his support for the fundraising efforts enabling these surveys.

### **Gareth Harris, Cotswold Water Park Dragonfly Atlas Project**

1. Cham, S., Nelson, B., Parr, A., Prentice, S., Smallshire, D. and Taylor, P. (Eds) (2014). *Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland*. Biological Records Centre & British Dragonfly Society. Published by Field Studies Council.
2. Harris, G and Pickering, Dr. S J (eds.) (2008). *Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan 2007 ñ 2016*. Cotswold Water Park Society.
3. Holland, S.C. (1991). *Distribution of Dragonflies in Gloucestershire*. Toddington Press Ltd.
4. With thanks to Steve Prentice, British Dragonfly Society
5. Fox, A.D. (1987). *Dragonflies in the Cotswold Water Park*. A report to the Nature Conservancy Council. The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BT.



# Forest of Dean Conservation Panel



Beautiful yellow underwing *Anarta myrtilli* © Roger Gaunt

Meetings between Forestry Commission personnel and representatives of various conservation bodies as well as several statutory authorities have been taking place twice yearly for many years.

The agenda includes all current issues such as wild boar in the Forest and the Cinderford Northern Quarter. Updates on Forest Operations, SSSIs and reports from participants are also included.

It has been resolved that this will change to one meeting a year with an email update in the autumn. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th February 2015.

I have represented the GNS at these meetings for nearly thirty years. I feel it is time that someone else took over. I am now finding it particularly hard to follow the proceedings as my hearing has deteriorated.

The last autumn meeting was held on 16th September. The indoor meeting at Bank House, Coleford was preceded by a site meeting over in Monmouthshire.

The Forestry Commission over there is now called Natural Resources Wales. They have been responsible for converting quite extensive areas of conifer plantation into lowland heath in the same way as the FC has converted such places as The Park, Tidenham Chase, Crabtree Hill, Edgehills and Wigpool in the Dean.

The results in Monmouthshire have been very successful and a useful exchange of views took place between those managing the areas in both countries.

Beacon Hill, Trellech and Broad Meend are excellent examples of what can be achieved. They are particularly important to us as they are stepping stones between habitats in the Welsh mountains and our heathland sites. Tidenham Chase is only four miles as the moth flies from Beacon Hill! The beautiful yellow underwing *Anarta myrtilli* (shown here) that I recorded at The Park in 2003 must have come from there and a larva was found later that year. It has not been seen since a fairly intensive grazing regime was started.

If you are interested in taking my place representing the GNS at these meetings please contact me and I will be pleased to give more details of what is involved.

**Roger Gaunt**

roger.gaunt@btinternet.com

# Field Meeting, Haresfield Beacon and Vinegar Hill, 14 September 2014

Thirteen of us, and an exemplary dog (who remained quiet and well-behaved on her lead), met on 14 September for a morning walk over Haresfield Beacon and Vinegar Hill.

Haresfield Beacon is a promontory of the Cotswold scarp south of Gloucester owned by the National Trust, with Vinegar Hill privately owned but registered for Open Access immediately below it.

We began by looking at the autumn flowers of the limestone. Prominent was burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, a member of the carrot family. Most people find this group difficult, but on Cotswold grassland at this time of year there are few common umbellifers, and it is likely to be either this species or the heavier-looking wild carrot. Other species of restricted distribution in the county seen in flower today included small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, eyebright *Euphrasia* agg, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, musk mallow *Malva moschata*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, ploughman's spikenard *Inula conyzae*, yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* and rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*.

The site also encompasses several archaeological features. Nearest the meet point are the steep banks of the Bulwarks hill-fort. This has been cleared of scrub over the last year, producing a lovely show of great mullein *Verbascum thapsus*. Sadly for the lepidopterists with us, there was no sign of mullein moth *Cucullia verbasci*, which is unusual. As Guy Meredith pointed out, mullein at this time of year usually looks really moth-eaten – just a stem but loaded with big beautiful ice-blue and yellow caterpillars.



Admiring the moths © Juliet Bailey

Continuing to the end of the promontory and the hill-fort there, we walked the terracettes of the vertiginous scarp slope. We were looking for the orchid autumn lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*, but did not find any. However, the attractive carline thistle, which is never a problem weed, was frequent.

Distantly a young buzzard *Buteo buteo* was bleating, a green woodpecker *Picus viridis* was calling. There were goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* on the thistles, the scrub was populated with linnets *C. cannabina* and long tailed tits *Aegithalos caudatus*, robins *Erithacus*

*rubecula*, wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* and the “hweet” calls of warblers.

We gathered at the trig point to admire the view; Stinchcombe Hill to the southwest, the magnificent sweep of the Severn, the hills of the Dean beyond, and May Hill visible, though hazy.

Roger Pearce had brought along tubes containing some of his overnight catch of moths from the area including brimstone moth *Opisthagraptis luteolata*, lunar underwing *Omphaloscelis lunosa*, flame shoulder *Ochropleura plecta*, snout *Hypena proboscidalis*, canary-shouldered thorn *Ennomos alniaria*, square-spot rustic *Xestia xanthographa*, setaceous hebrew character *Xestia c-nigrum*, yellow underwing *Noctua* sp. and spectacle moth *Xestia c-nigrum*.

While he released them, some of us went to examine the SSSI geological exposure which is



Great mullein *Verbascum thapsus* on the Bulwarks © Juliet Bailey

hidden in the ash woodland just 10m beyond the trig point. This involves a bit of a scramble, pushing through scrub and along a steep bank. The site is famous as one of the few places in the country where you can see the exact junction of the inferior oolite and the upper lias sands. Leaving the hill-top, we went down towards Vinegar Hill. En-route we admired a beautiful sweep of the yellow lichen *Candelaria concolor* on an ash trunk. This species is becoming more common as the atmospheric SO<sub>2</sub> pollution level declines.

The grassland of Vinegar Hill is much more fertile, so the plants of the thin limestone become rare, replaced by heavy grass growth, buttercups *Ranunculus sp.* and clover *Trifolium sp.* We were particularly looking for the unusual plant dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, which grows in abundance on parts of the site. It has yellow gorse-like flowers in June, so was hard to find in mid-September, though we came across several plants. Vinegar Hill is used mainly as horse pasture, and though they did not bother us, their presence was evident in the poached ground, deeply pocketed and baked dry by the summer sun. The field where we went to look for the dyer's greenweed has not apparently been grazed this summer, and was full of creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* but also *knapweed Centaurea sp.*, and was thick with crane flies.

We walked back up to the National Trust land and returned to the cars on the path at the bottom of the slope, gradually picking up members of the party that had held back for one reason or another. It had been such a pleasant morning of gentle late summer sunshine that just sitting contemplating was pleasure enough for some. The warmth had brought out the butterflies which Roger had been recording; common blue *Polyommatus icarus* (male and female), a brown argus *Aricia agestis*, 12 speckled wood *Pararge aegeria*, four red admirals *Vanessa atalanta*, a meadow brown *Maniola jurtina*, two green-veined white *Pieris napi*, a small tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*, a comma *Polygonia c-album*, as well as two female common darter dragonflies *Sympetrum striolatum*.

**Juliet Bailey**

# Rampages with a Newt Trap 2014



Get Grubby Gang © David Dewsbury

A few years ago I invented and developed a different design of newt trap in the hope that the traditional and much discredited bottle trap could be superseded. Since then Susan and I have been having a lot of fun carrying out newt surveys which we can do fairly quickly on a reasonably large scale. We have surveyed various forests, Duchy estates and National Trust properties, etc. This article describes what we have been up to this year which has seen us mainly working in the Forest of Dean. We have been devoting more time to showing newts to groups of young people in addition to our usual survey projects.

## May 11th, 2014 'Get Grubby Gang'

The objective of this outing was to attempt to show members of the Get Grubby Gang (formerly Stroud Watch Group) some reptiles and amphibians in the Forest of Dean. Finding reptiles on demand is a tall order but we were more confident of the amphibians, especially newts, using our traps. Susan and I placed some of the traps overnight in a pond where we had previously found all three newt species and planned a route which would take us through an area where we found all four reptile species within half an hour about two years ago. Then we kept our fingers crossed for a fine day.

We met up with Watch organisers Val Box, Jane Bolton and Emma plus five families on a day which was very wet underfoot but thankfully not raining and even showing glimpses of sun. This can be ideal weather to find reptiles basking before it gets too hot when they all tend to disappear. We made a very long line of little wellies with larger ones interspersed as we wound our way through the Forest towards Yew Tree Brake where we would search for reptiles. The difficulty of many people trying to find a very few reptiles soon became apparent. Susan managed to spot a grass snake *Natrix natrix* but it was gone before she could show it to anyone else. We managed to listen to a wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* singing in a tree close by but then

decided to move on and see what our 50 sharp eyes could spot on route. Someone mysteriously found an immature palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus* and a small frog *Rana temporaria*.

We had to lead our giant wellie snake through some conifers which is not hugely exciting but we knew of a large wood ant nest *Formica rufa* which we thought might be of interest. One of the children knew straight away what this was and also of the 'bluebell trick'. Before long the ants were being 'attacked' by an army of blue flowers which turned red as the ants defended their nest with formic acid. Quite an exciting interlude!

Eventually we emerged from the trees at the open space near the top of Awre's Glow leading to the Lightmoor waste heap, and someone spotted a wild boar *Sus scrofa* making his way across the clearing. He was far enough away not to notice us but near enough for most of our sharp-eyed gang to get a good look, all thought of reptiles and amphibians forgotten. Eventually our big game quarry disappeared into the scrubland and we continued the original search, arriving at the pond to find our newt traps. Time to cross our fingers again. The children soon set to work retrieving the traps to see if any great crested newts (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* had been caught (under strict supervision of licence holders of course).

We caught all three newt species in considerable numbers. Susan attempted to write down our records but we soon gave that up to make sure everyone had a fair go and to answer the myriad of questions which came our way. It was quite a busy hour but eventually everyone had had a chance to see and handle the newts before they were all eventually returned to the deep. No one fell in either!

Next on the agenda were the two fairly new ponds created on Awre's Glow by the Forestry Commission where Susan and I had also set some traps. By then we had at least 20 experts and we found ourselves almost redundant. The children discovered we had caught more than



Everyone crowds around to see the catch © David Dewsbury



Captivated by the newts © David Dewsbury

40 palmate newts, a handful of smooth newts *Lissotriton vulgaris* and three great crested newts which we could now confirm had been able to colonise the ponds. The kids were able to identify and sex them then safely release them into the water which was very satisfying for us teachers.

To round off the day one young chap suddenly had a viviparous lizard *Zootoca vivipara* in his hand. I've no idea how he caught it down in the bracken but there it was safe and sound in his hand. After a photo shoot it was duly released back into the bracken and we set off back to the cars.

It was a very weary line of wellies which made it back to the cars and it was hard to differentiate their colour through the layers of mud. Their new title of 'Get Grubby Gang' was well and truly earned.

## May 11th, 2014 Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

After waving goodbye to the Get Grubby Gang we set off to prepare for the next event. The objective this time was to show newts to a group of young naturalists and we had a plan. The first task was to place some of our traps in the pond at Horsepool Bottom where we would be meeting the group the next day. The next step was to return home and set a couple of traps in our own garden pond.

In the morning we collected up some of the newts caught in our garden which fortunately included both sexes of all three species. These were loaded up into the car along with a small aquarium and a large container of pond water. The aquarium, pond water and newts were duly installed at the Oakraven Centre (formally Plump Hill Centre) near Mitcheldean. We had a maximum audience of 15 (plus a few extras) all arranged by Rosie Kelsall of GWT, children being in the majority. I tried to give a young person's overview of what newts are and how they fit into the order of things. We even persuaded a slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* to come along for comparison of skin types etc. Before long this session became more of a dialogue with questions thick and fast followed by a bit of a quiz just to reinforce a few things we had all learned. When asked what the tadpoles eat I was able to point to all the daphnia swimming around in the tank and it all fell into place beautifully. The children were all able to identify all species.

Next we were ready to walk down to Horsepool Bottom and investigate the traps. Andy Moir the site owner had already pre-warned us that he hadn't 'seen a lot in there' but we remained hopeful. The first trap was retrieved with much enthusiasm and anticipation (and some trepidation on my part). We carefully opened the trap to reveal four palmate newts and seven smooth newts. After a few gasps of amazement we set about the task of recording our

catch and then negotiating over who was going to let the first one go. Adults didn't get a look in! Each newt was lovingly handled and carefully released back into the water.

Susan and I had gone over the top, setting five traps (we had looked at this pond three years previously without much success) so there was quite a lot to do. It was tricky organising things so that everyone could have a go at something. The second trap was hauled out and found to contain similar newts to the first except for one much larger black one. The children were able to identify it immediately as a great crested newt. The only problem now – who was going to be the one to release it?

By the end of the morning we had caught 11 of the big black monsters. A couple of the younger children took a little coaxing but everyone had handled and released some and even the adults were eventually allowed to have a go. Everyone learned quite a lot about wildlife and Susan had some more records to send in.

### **May 17th, 2014 Herefordshire Amphibian and Reptile Trust.**

Now for the professionals. Hereford Amphibian and Reptile Trust (HART) were interested in exploring the heath land around Crabtree Hill in the search for reptiles and amphibians. In particular they wanted to see the new ponds created behind Woogreens Lake by the Forestry Commission a couple of years previously. The Forestry Commission asked Susan and I if we would host it which was ideal because we thought it was time to check the new ponds for newts anyway.

We met the HART members at 10:30 in the morning on a day that was already becoming too hot to find reptiles out in the open. However, we did encounter one lizard crossing the path through the plantations.

The traps revealed that newts had certainly found the new ponds. These ponds had been made partly because Woogreens Lake itself has had fish illegally introduced and was no longer suitable for newts and less suitable for dragonflies.

We caught a total of 42 palmate newts, nine smooth newts and 11 great crested newts.

Also, frog tadpoles, numerous toad tadpoles and several dragonfly larvae.

The professionals were impressed by our newt surveying technique and we arranged a separate session to help them add the trap to their newt licences.

We have very much enjoyed showing our native newts to younger audiences and we would like some further opportunities to do this next year (April and May). If you have any ideas please let us know ([david.dewsbury@btinternet.com](mailto:david.dewsbury@btinternet.com)).

**David Dewsbury**, County Amphibian and Reptile Recorder



Common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* © David Dewsbury

# Moseley Green and New Fancy, 7th June, 2014

The prospects for our field meeting did not look good with the promise of heavy rain for most of the day. The main objective was to find small pearl-bordered fritillaries *Boloria selene* and adders *Vipera berus* both of which are sun-loving creatures. Many people seemed to have estimated our chances of success to be quite low deciding that it may not be worth coming all the way to the Forest of Dean in the rain and would stay at home in the dry. Quite a pity as it turned out.

Our detailed plan was to meet up at New Fancy car park to check a pond there for newts. It is a nice pond and I had always thought that there should be great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* (GCN). We had found a solitary male in a pond not too far away but never here. Susan would also run her portable moth trap next to the pond just to see what might turn up. We would then proceed just up the road to look for fritillaries behind the bus stop on the RSPB reserve which is a well-known stronghold for them. After that we would spend the rest of the day on Moseley Green and Brandrick's Green and hope to catch a glimpse of the Rising Sun- we would get some sun one way or another! So, despite the forecast, Susan and I set out the afternoon before to lay our newt and moth traps for the unsuspecting creatures and just in time to make Andrew's nightjar adventure.

We started the next day sheltering in the car at New Fancy and thinking we could soon slink off home for nice warm cup of tea when two more cars turned up. Derek and Christine Foster and Tiz Butler were raring to go and see what we had caught in our traps so we donned the umbrellas and went to investigate the moths.

Our battery-powered trap does not generally catch huge numbers of moths but we were rewarded with 14 species: blood vein *Timandra comae* brown silver line *Petrophora chlorosata*, mottled beauty *Alcis repandata*, common swift *Hepialus lupulinus*, foxglove pug *Eupithecia pulchellata*, brown rustic *Rusina ferruginea*, middle barred minor *Oligia fasciuncula*, purple bar *Cosmorhoe ocellata*, dark brocade *Blepharita adusta*, green carpet *Colostygia pectinataria*, flame shoulder *Ochropleura plecta*, satin lute string *Tetheella fluctuosa*, scalloped hazel *Odontoptera bidentata* and small angle shades *Euplexia lucipara*.



'Dewsbury Newt Trap' with all three UK species  
7th June, 2014 © David Dewsbury

And so to our newt traps. We had deployed two traps at opposite sides of the pond. The first trap had captured 17 palmate newts *Lissotriton helveticus*, seven smooth newts *Lissotriton vulgaris* with males and females of each and also seven male great crested newts. This was definitive proof that there are GCN in the area. Strange that we caught no females at all although 75% of the newts we catch on average are males. The trap is a design which I invented a few years ago. Unlike the traditional bottle traps it allows a constant supply of fresh air which means there is no danger of suffocation for the captive newts and they are also not exposed to the glare of the sun. Consequently the traps can be left in situ for a



bit longer. They are also much more effective at catching newts, giving a more reliable survey result. Although the other trap contained only smooth and palmate newts it was a rewarding result proving the presence of all three UK species.

The weather was starting to look a bit brighter and we decided to continue in our objective of trying to find adders and fritillaries. A search of the New Fancy area did not reveal any adders even though it was a well-known location for them and Susan and I had seen two earlier in the week. Also, no fritillaries so, on to the bus stop which was to prove more lucrative. The sun was just starting to show through and we were rewarded with several small pearl-bordered fritillaries trying to warm themselves up.

The sun was now becoming more consistent but we decided it was time to refuel at the other Rising Sun.

After lunch we spent the whole afternoon reconnoitring Moseley Green for further fritillaries but they remained elusive at all likely locations. We did however encounter a few other butterflies including grizzled skippers *Pyrgus malvae* and a few small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*. The beautiful demoiselle damselfly *Calopteryx virgo* was also seen by a small stream on the opposite side of the road from the Mallard's Pike entrance.

After a long afternoon in the hot sun and feeling rather weary we decided to call it a day. It just goes to prove that weather forecasting is not an exact science.

### **David Dewsbury**

Gloucestershire Amphibian  
and Reptile Recorder



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, 7 June, 2014  
© David Dewsbury



Beautiful Demoiselle, 7th June, 2014 © David Dewsbury

# Summary of 2014 BTO Peregrine Survey, Gloucestershire

## General

A group of hard-working volunteers put a lot of local effort into this national survey – many thanks to all those who participated. A summary of our findings is given here, although of course it is not possible to reveal details of many of the actual sites because of the risk of persecution and because some are in private areas. Peregrine falcons *Falco peregrinus* can be seen at the well-known RSPB Symonds Yat viewpoint, and also around Christchurch, Cheltenham – both these sites held successful pairs this year, raising three and four youngsters respectively.

## Coverage

A total of 23 random 5x5km squares were surveyed, and although a couple of these squares contained nest-sites that were already known about, no new sites were found in these squares. This suggests that our previous knowledge was reasonably complete. Having said that, two previously unknown sites were discovered in other areas, and there might well be others. In particular, we might have pylon-nesting pairs that we haven't yet found (nests can be in cavities in the pylon structure, completely out of sight).

Almost 50 potential sites were surveyed, including every quarry we could find and get access to. Surveyors found 15 active nests in the county, and another two just outside the county border but within the area covered by "BTO Gloucestershire". Territorial behaviour was observed at a further five sites where actual nesting appears not to have taken place. Of these 22 sites, 11 are west of the Severn and 11 to the east. At a couple of sites where birds have nested previously, no nest was found this year.

## Nest outcomes

The outcomes at the 17 nest-sites can be summarised as follows:

Peregrine nest-sites found in 2014 survey, BTO Gloucestershire			
Type of site	Number of nests	Number of successful nests	Number of fledged young (minimum)
Quarry (used or disused)	7	7	18
Building	4	4	13
Pylon	3	1	2
Natural cliff	3	3	5*
Totals	17	15	38

\* Note that it can be difficult to monitor nests on cliffs, so this figure in particular might be an underestimate.

The last national survey was done in 2002, and I estimate that there were about 8 nests then. Hence we can probably conclude that Peregrines are doing quite well in the county, as they are in much of southern Britain, where they make extensive use of "human" sites for nesting. We will need to wait for the full BTO report to see how they are doing elsewhere and what the population estimate is now (that was one of the aims of this survey); certainly the recent atlas indicated that they have declined in north-west Scotland.

## Gordon Kirk

# **A Raptor Monitoring Group for Gloucestershire – inaugural meeting**

## **Saturday 17th January, 10am, St Peter’s School, Gloucester**

The BTO’s 2014 breeding Peregrine Survey (see page 26) has led to the idea that a raptor monitoring group might be set up in Gloucestershire; similar groups exist in many other counties. Three of us have met to discuss this, and having taken soundings from some known enthusiasts we have come to the conclusion that an appetite exists for such a group. We are therefore organising a meeting at 10am on Saturday 17th January at St Peter’s School, Stroud Road, Gloucester, GL4 0DD, to which GNS members are invited – please reply to [glosraptors@gmail.com](mailto:glosraptors@gmail.com) if you wish to attend.

We aim to start slowly and see how things develop, so we are not thinking of a formal “club” at this stage, but we currently working on a website and we envisage a presence on social media.

The main purpose would be long-term monitoring of known breeding sites so that we can learn more about this group of birds. We aim to contribute to scientific knowledge and conservation, to raise awareness of persecution, and to generally educate and inform people.

Specifically, we hope that contributors will monitor and record breeding activity and/or behaviour annually, collate records for submission to BTO and our county recorder, produce an annual report, and meet (perhaps twice a year) to plan and evaluate each breeding season. Of course care will be taken to keep sites confidential where necessary, but the Peregrine Survey report shows just what can be discovered if individuals pool their findings.

Are you interested? Do you know of a nest site? If so, please come along to the meeting to find out more. Exactly which species will be monitored will depend on the number of people involved and their particular interests – peregrine, hobby, kestrel, sparrowhawk, goshawk, red kite, buzzard, owls...

We do need to have an idea of likely numbers, so do please reply using the e-mail address above – thank you.

Note also that a specific Barn Owl Monitoring Programme is being planned as a parallel and complementary initiative – watch this space for further details.

**Natalie Wyld**

**Rob Husbands**

**Gordon Kirk**

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Registered charity No. 252710

# WILDLIFE RECORDING INFORMATION SHEET

The Society's official recording area is the whole of the vice-counties 33 (East Gloucestershire) and 34 (West Gloucestershire). However, for practical purposes, certain recorders only cover the administrative county of Gloucestershire, comprising the districts of Cotswold, Stroud, Forest of Dean, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury, since the Bristol Naturalists' Society covers the Unitary Authority of South Gloucestershire and the City of Bristol (further details available from the individual recorders as listed below).

The Society welcomes observations and records from members and others, and these should be sent to the Recorders as detailed below. Records may be submitted in any form (so long as they are legible and intelligible); some Recorders prefer them on A6 cards (one per species), or, for certain groups, on the appropriate recording form (available from the Recorders - see below), though a simple list (preferably in systematic order) is acceptable for groups such as **moths**.

### **Ideally the following information should be supplied:**

- \* Species name.
- \* Where seen (name of location, preferably using names on the 1:50000/1:25000 Ordnance Survey maps; if in doubt include a sketch map of the site) plus six figure map reference. It is helpful to Recorders if the tetrad number is also given. For sightings in the Cotswold Water Park observers are asked to quote the official County Council pit numbers whenever possible.
- \* Date.
- \* Observer's name and address.

### **Also useful:**

- \* Number or abundance.
- \* Habitat.
- \* Where appropriate a description of the species or a note of how identification was made including details of any guidebook used.
- \* Any other relevant information.

These details should be sent to the appropriate Recorder from the list below. The precise location of rare species will be kept confidential in the interests of conservation - records should be clearly labelled CONFIDENTIAL if they are to be so treated. Straightforward records are too numerous to be acknowledged individually by the Recorders, but when a reply is required please enclose a stamped addressed envelope if the recorder asks for a voucher specimen.

It is also possible to record your sightings online – see details below.

The most interesting records are published in the Society's "GNS News", but all records (common species or not) are valuable in building up a picture of the present status and distribution of species in our county, for compiling annual reports and for updating our records and those at the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records and the national Biological Records Centre, CEH, Wallingford.

Under the Data Protection Act the GNS advises members and other observers that their personal details (name, address, telephone number, email address) will be stored, either on paper or electronically, as part of the Society's recording system. These details will not be passed on, or sold, to third parties with the exception of the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records, subject to the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations. Should the observer wish that certain parts of a record remain confidential (e.g. for reasons such as sensitive species, sensitive site, restriction of access to land, anonymity), they should contact the relevant Recorder and discuss the matter, stating their reasons.

## COUNTY RECORDERS' CONTACT DETAILS

Details of checklists and other GNS-published articles are available on the website and in The Gloucestershire Naturalist.

**BIRDS:** Richard Baatsen (01452 740161); email: [baatsen@surfbirder.com](mailto:baatsen@surfbirder.com). For those observers who are reporting a county rarity or BBRC species, the appropriate forms can be obtained from the Recorder; a guidance document listing all the species that require detailed descriptions is also available (please send sae); submission of records by email preferred (see also Gloucestershire Bird Report 2005 pp 18-20). The GNS website has a recording form showing all required information that can be printed off.

British Trust for Ornithology Representative: Gordon Kirk (01452 741724);  
email: [GordonKirk@aol.com](mailto:GordonKirk@aol.com)

Gloucestershire Bird Report (annual report on the county's avifauna) published by Gloucestershire Ornithological Coordinating Committee (GOCC).

**MAMMALS:** John Field, c/o The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Conservation Centre, Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, Gloucester GL4 6SX (01452 383333);  
email: [john.field@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk](mailto:john.field@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk)

Gloucestershire Bat Group Recorder: David Wells email: [dave-wells@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:dave-wells@mypostoffice.co.uk)

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS:** David Dewsbury (01594 832068);  
email: [david.dewsbury@btinternet.com](mailto:david.dewsbury@btinternet.com)

**FISH:** Pete Bradshaw, c/o The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Conservation Centre, Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, Gloucester GL4 6SX (01452 383333);  
email: [peter.bradshaw@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk](mailto:peter.bradshaw@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk)

**CRAYFISH:** John Field, c/o The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Conservation Centre, Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, Gloucester GL4 6SX (01452 383333);  
email: [john.field@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk](mailto:john.field@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk)

## INVERTEBRATES:

Gloucestershire Invertebrate Group (GIG): Andrew Leach, c/o The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Conservation Centre, Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, Gloucester GL4 6SX. (01452 383333); email: [Andrew.leach@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk](mailto:Andrew.leach@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk)



**BUTTERFLIES:** Chris Wiltshire (01453 545509); email: [chriswiltshire164@o2.co.uk](mailto:chriswiltshire164@o2.co.uk)  
Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch: [www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk)

**MOTHS:**

VC33 East Gloucestershire: Robert Homan (01242 235408);  
email: [theapiary@hotmail.com](mailto:theapiary@hotmail.com)

VC34 West Gloucestershire (west of the Severn): Michael Bradley (01531 822315);  
email: [michaelw1184w@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:michaelw1184w@hotmail.co.uk)

VC34 West Gloucestershire (east of the Severn): Neale Jordan-Mellersh (0117 9854730);  
email: [sneale48@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sneale48@hotmail.co.uk)

Online distribution maps and additional information for Gloucestershire moths can be found at [http://www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk/Guys\\_maps/mothmap.html](http://www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk/Guys_maps/mothmap.html)

**DRAGONFLIES:** Ingrid Twissell (01452 714413);  
email: [canditwissell@btinternet.com](mailto:canditwissell@btinternet.com)

**DIPTERA (Part) LOWER BRACHYCERA (Robberflies, Hunchback-Flies, Water-Snipeflies, Bee-Flies, Snipeflies, Windowflies, Soldierflies, Horseflies, Stiletto-Flies, Awl-Flies, Wood-Soldierflies):** Martin Matthews  
email: [martmatt@btinternet.com](mailto:martmatt@btinternet.com). John Phillips email: [jandvphillips@talktalk.net](mailto:jandvphillips@talktalk.net)

**HOVERFLIES, CONOPID FLIES AND LADYBIRDS:** David Iliff (01242 674398);  
email: [davidiliff@talk21.com](mailto:davidiliff@talk21.com)

**ANTS, BEES & WASPS:** Tony Taylor (01452 728734);  
email: [taylor.ant@cotswoldwireless.co.uk](mailto:taylor.ant@cotswoldwireless.co.uk)

**SPIDERS:** David Haigh (01242 513544);  
email: [djrhaigh@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:djrhaigh@hotmail.co.uk)

**BETTERLES (other than Ladybirds), BARKFLIES, WOODLICE, CENTIPEDES, MILLIPEDES, HARVESTMEN, FALSE SCORPIONS, LACEWINGS, SPRINGTAILS & FRESHWATER INVERTEBRATES:** David Scott-Langley  
email: [dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk)

**GRASSHOPPERS, BUSH-CRICKETS, EARWIGS, & COCKROACHES, BUGS (HEMIPTERA):** John Widgery (01242 673873); email: [johnwidgery@waitrose.com](mailto:johnwidgery@waitrose.com)

**LAND & FRESHWATER MOLLUSCS:** David Long (01242 527673);  
email: [david@long55.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:david@long55.wanadoo.co.uk)

**ECTOPARASITES (Lice, louse-flies):** Robin Sellers (01946 725453);  
email: [sellers@craghouse7.freemove.co.uk](mailto:sellers@craghouse7.freemove.co.uk)

**FRESHWATER TRICLADS:** Larry Bellamy (01594 516420);  
email: lar.amy@btinternet.com

**FLOWERING PLANTS, FERNS & STONEWORTS:**

Mark and Clare Kitchen (01453 810958); email: clareandmarkplants@yahoo.co.uk

**MOSSES AND LIVERWORTS:** Peter Martin (01666 503791);  
email: petergmartin@btinternet.com

**FUNGI:** Cotswold Fungus Group & VC33 County recorder email: recorder@cotswoldfungusgroup.com. Dean Fungus Group & VC34 recorders: Keith & Valerie Davies (01452 760278); email: keith.val@hotmail.com

**LICHENS:** Juliet Bailey email: glos.lichens@gmail.com

**PLANT GALLS:** Robert Homan (01242 235408) email: theapiary@hotmail.com

**ONLINE RECORDING** at [www.universalquestions.com/nature](http://www.universalquestions.com/nature)

There is now an online county wildlife recording system at Richard Beal's website covering Birds, Butterflies, Dragonflies & Damselflies, Mammals and Orchids. It is a straightforward, but nevertheless sophisticated way, of getting your sightings from your desktop to the county recorders and by using the system you can make a valuable contribution to the GNS ongoing recording effort. After a simple registration procedure you can start recording straightaway and you can return to the web site at any time by simply logging in.

**NEW RECORDERS**

The Society is always looking for new Recorders to fill vacant positions (particularly DIPTERA and FRESHWATER FAUNA) or to cover groups not listed above (no matter how obscure!). Anyone willing to undertake these tasks or to organise (or help organise) surveys in the county is invited to contact David Scott-Langley (Chairman, GNS Scientific & Publications Subcommittee), 19 Chesterton Grove, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1XN; Tel 01285 659631; email: dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk

**OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS AND ADDRESSES**

**GNS Website:**

[www.glosnats.org](http://www.glosnats.org) for sightings, recorders, events, archives and species information.

**GNS Webmaster:**

Richard Beal; email: richard.beal@richardbeal.com

**GNS Library:**

Our library has moved to the main house at Hartpury College.  
Phone 01452 702100 before visiting to check the room is free for use.



**GNS Chairman:**

Mike Smart, 143 Cheltenham Road, Gloucester GL2 0JH (01452 421131);  
email: smartmike@btinternet.com

**GNS Membership Secretary:**

Andrew Bluett, 50 Kingsmead, Abbeydale, Gloucester, GL4 5DY (01452 610085);  
email: gnsmembership@btinternet.com. See also Membership page on GNS Website.

**GNS Secretary:**

Lynne Garner (01452 614354); email: lynne@moorend1989.plus.com.

**GNS Cirencester Branch Chairman:**

David Scott-Langley, 19 Chesterton Grove, Cirencester, Glos GL7 1XN (01285 659631);  
email: dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk.

**Editor of the GNS News** (records and general matters; appears quarterly): Kate Kibble;  
email: kkibble@sky.com

**Editor of The Gloucestershire Naturalist David Scott-Langley**, 19 Chesterton Grove,  
Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1XN (01285 659631); email dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk.  
Articles and reports for TGN should be sent to the Editor by February 28th of the year of  
publication. Notes for contributors and page layout are available from the same source.

**Natural England** (Southwest Region) Natural England, First Floor, Temple Quay House, 2 The  
Square, Bristol, BS1 6EB Tel: 0300 060 2065

**Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records:** Conservation Centre, Robinswood  
Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, GLOUCESTER GL4 6SX (01452 389950);  
email: gcer@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk.  
Development Manager: Linda Moore  
email: linda.moore@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk

**Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust:** Conservation Centre, Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir  
Road, Gloucester GL4 6SX (01452 383333). Web site: www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk

**Gloucestershire Orchard Trust:** Ann Smith (secretary/coordinator) 01452 855677  
www.gloucestershireorchardtrust.org.uk; email: info@gloucestershireorchardtrust.org.uk

Issued by the Scientific & Publications Sub-committee of the Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society, January 2014.



# Diary

## Field Meetings

**Sunday 14 December 2014, 11am.** Laurie Lee Wood. Formerly known as Trantershill Plantation. this wood belonged to the author Laurie Lee (of Cider with Rosie fame) and was purchased in 2013 by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. This is an exploratory meeting, recording anything and everything we see. We will probably move on at lunchtime to the Woolpack in Slad, which was his local, for a glass of seasonal cheer. Meet at the reserve entrance, SO876068, on Knapp Lane immediately north of Swift's Hill reserve.  
Leader: Juliet Bailey, 01452 722310.

**Sunday 11 January 2015, 11am.** Cotswold Water Park West – winter wildfowl and general interest. Meet at Neigh Bridge car park, Somerford Keynes, just off the Spine Road, SU018947. Leader: Ken Cservenka, 01285 656480.

**Sunday 15 February 2015, 11am.** Brockeridge Common – a general look at a traditional common land. Brockeridge Common is used as winter pasture on higher land for the cattle and sheep that graze the Severn and Avon wet grasslands during the summer. We hope that a local farmer will join us to give the background to this continuing traditional practice. This meeting will contribute records for the wildlife element of Twyning council's parish development plan. Meet at SO885379, on A38 north of Junction 1 of M50.  
Leader: Mike Smart, 01452 421131.

**Sunday 15 March 2015, 11am.** Frampton on Severn, a general interest meeting along the canal and back through the village. Meet at the canal bridge SO746084.  
Leader: Andrew Bluett, 01452 610085.

**Saturday 25 April 2015, 11am.** Newts of Awre's Glow between Mallards Pike and Staple Edge Wood. Leader: David Dewsbury, 01594 832068, 07786 543961.

## Annual General Meeting 2015

**27 March 2015, 7.30pm.** The next GNS AGM will be held on at a slightly different venue- the Gala Club in Longford, Gloucester which has a large function room. The guest speaker to follow AGM business will be announced shortly. The Gala Club is located at Fairmile Gardens, Gloucester GL2 9EB.

## Cirencester Indoor Events Programme

**12th December 2014.** Andrew Bluett: Wet Waders, Dry Waders. A look at wading birds with a little more detail, where they come from and where they go.

**9th January 2015.** Mark and Clare Kitchen: On the Track of Wild Flowers, a year of plant hunting. Mark and Clare Kitchen are the County Recorders for Flowering Plants, Ferns and Stoneworts.

**13th February 2015.** To be announced

**13th March 2015.** Cirencester Branch AGM. This only takes up a small amount of the meeting and is followed by cheese and wine, photographic projected image, photographic print and artwork competitions.

**10th April 2015.** To be announced

## Other meetings

### **Dean Fungus Group**

The Dean Fungus Group runs forays throughout the year. Contact Keith or Valerie Davies for information on 01452 760278 or email keith.val@hotmail.com.

### **Gloucestershire Invertebrate Group**

The GIG has field meetings mainly at weekends from April to October. GNS members are welcome to come along and see what they do. Contact David Long (01242 527673) for further advice.

### **GNS Lichen Group**

The Lichen Group meets once a month during the warmer months. New people, including beginners, always welcome. To join the mailing list, email Juliet Bailey, glos.lichens@gmail.com.

## The Gloucestershire Naturalist – back issues

As a result of having to provide copies of back issues of The Gloucestershire Naturalist Volumes 1 – 12 to the British Library and through the generosity of some of our members, we now have on file scanned copies of all of those issues on a single CD ROM.

We have two further back issues available as scanned files on a second CD ROM, volumes 13 (2000) and 14 (2008), Stephen Bishop's New Flora of Gloucestershire.

Both discs are available at a cost of £6.00 each from Andrew Bluett, Membership Secretary, at gnsmembership@btinternet.com or on 01452 610085.

Further information on our web-site at [www.glosnats.org](http://www.glosnats.org) including an index of the articles in volumes 1-12.

# Society Officers & Contacts



## **President: Mrs Anna Jones**

### **Chairman:**

Mike Smart, 143 Cheltenham Road, Gloucester GL2 0JH  
tel: 01452 421131 email: smartmike@btinternet.com

### **Vice Chairman:**

David Scott-Langley, 19 Chesterton Grove, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1XN  
tel: 01285 659631 email: dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk

### **Secretary:**

Lynne Garner, Moorend Cottage, Watery Lane,  
Upton St Leonards, Glos. GL4 8DE  
tel: 01452 614354 email: lynne@moorend1989.plus.com

### **Treasurer:**

Andy Oliver, email: gnstreasurer@btinternet.com

### **Membership Secretary:**

Andrew Bluett, 50 Kingsmead, Abbeymead, Gloucester GL4 5DY  
tel: 01452 610085 email: gnsmembership@btinternet.com

### **Cirencester Branch Chairman:**

David Scott-Langley, 19 Chesterton Grove, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1XN  
tel: 01285 659631 email: dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk

### **GNS News Editor:**

Kate Kibble, email: kkibble@sky.com

### **The Gloucestershire Naturalist Editor:**

David Scott-Langley, 19 Chesterton Grove, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1XN  
tel: 01285 659631 email: dscottlangley@hotmail.co.uk

### **GNS Website:**

[www.glosnats.org](http://www.glosnats.org)

### **GNS Library:**

Our library has moved to the main house at Hartpury College.  
Phone 01452 702100 before visiting to check the room is free for use.



Oak twig from Forest of Dean with three bushy lichens: *Ramalina farinacea* (bottom left), *Evernia prunastri* (bottom right), *Usnea subfloridana* (top middle). © Juliet Bailey

